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Local Labour Journalism in England and Wales 1843 to  
1891, with particular reference to the newspapers of  
W. Owen and J.T. Morgan.

Aled Gruffydd Jones.

Submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in the  
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## SYNOPSIS

In the summer of 1873 two editors began to publish two distinct groups of explicitly radical working class local newspapers. Their common objective was to establish a national system of local labour newspapers to challenge the growing dominance of the 'commercial' press. Despite many differences of style, format and language - one of Morgan's papers was written entirely in Welsh - these two groups of newspapers attempted to attract a similar type of unionised working class reader, and in many important respects they also propounded a very similar philosophy of labour.

The thesis outlines the development of these newspapers and traces the activities of their young and energetic editors. It suggests an explanation of their limited initial successes as journalist agitators and of their subsequent demise in the months and years following 1875, and locates their newspapers within the wider context of radical and Liberal journalism in the period 1843 to 1891. Four major issues are discussed, the first being the place of the Owen and the Morgan papers in the context of mid to late Nineteenth Century local journalism. The second issue concerns the sociology of the papers' potential readership, whilst the third relates to the financing of the two editors' respective newspaper ventures. Finally, the concept of 'labour journalism' as a distinct form of journalism in this period is examined.

Both editors sought to serve the trade unionist and radical-Liberal movements, but both also guarded jealously their editorial independence from either trade union leaders or Liberal politicians. In so doing they not only recorded and interpreted events during a turbulent period of labour unrest, but they also provided many diverse groups of semi- and unskilled workers living between North Staffordshire and South Wales with a valuable means of communication and organisation.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.A.M.	Amalgamated Association of Miners.
A.S.E.	Amalgamated Society of Engineers.
A.L.U.	Bristol, West of England and South Wales Amalgamated Labourers' Union.
L.T.C.	London Trades Council.
N.A.L.U.	National Agricultural Labourers' Union.
N.A.M.	National Association of Mineworkers.
P.T.A.	Provincial Typographical Association.

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I wish to thank the late Mrs. Millicent Copestake for her help and warm encouragement during my researches into the life and work of her grandfather, Mr. William Owen. I was helped also by many useful and enlightening discussions with Dr. Joyce Bellamy, Dr. Chris Fisher, Dr. Deian Hopkin, Dr. Louis James, Dr. Joanne Shattock and with individual members of the University of Wales Periodicals Group.

Valuable comments and criticisms of earlier draft versions of the thesis were made by Ms. Yasmin Ali, Dr. Stephen Coltham and by my supervisor, Professor Royden Harrison. Any errors of fact or eccentricities of style which remain are, of course, my own.

## DECLARATION

Some of the material included in the case-study of J.T.Morgan's involvement in the South Wales coal strike of 1875, in Chapter Six section (i), is based on work undertaken during the writing of an earlier dissertation, Jones, A.G., 'John Thomas Morgan and the Workman's Advocate/Amddiffynnydd y Gweithiwr: the labour press and trade unionism in South Wales 1871 - 76', University of Warwick, Unpublished M.A.Thesis, 1978.

## INTRODUCTION

The study of the labour newspaper press in the mid to late nineteenth century is in reality the study of a certain kind of working class radical. Weekly news reports were more than simple reflections of world events, they were chronicles of the political and industrial activity of their editors. The history and the perceived functions of labour newspapers were thus closely associated with the political persuasions and the personal proclivities of the editors and the journalists who were responsible for their production. These journalists placed their craft at the service of the organised trade union movement, but they never countenanced any direct trade union control over their editorial decisions. They maintained an independent existence whilst eagerly engaging in the local struggles of provincial workers. How, and with what success, they were able to satisfy these objectives will be the main subject of this thesis.

To illustrate the dynamism and the diversity of the alternative 'labour' press in the 1870's I have chosen to examine two related but contrasting examples of the genre. William Owen's Examiner series and John Thomas Morgan's Workman's Advocate and Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr were close contemporaries and were thought by their editors to perform very similar social functions as local radical newspapers. However, in terms of their style and their tone, they were very different papers. Furthermore, Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr was written entirely in Welsh whilst the Workman's Advocate was, in its first year of publication, a bilingual paper.

With particular regard to these papers and their editors I intend to discuss broadly four issues. The first is their place in the evolving context of nineteenth century provincial journalism. Secondly there is the question of their relationship to their readership, a question which also touches upon aspects of popular education and culture. The third concerns the ways in which the editors financed and produced their papers,

and the final issue relates to the concept of 'labour journalism' as a distinct journalistic form in this period.

The structure of the thesis reflects my concern for these four central issues. In the First Chapter the context of mid to late Victorian journalism is described as it relates to the tradition of radical journalism, to the growth of the newspaper press in general in the post 1855 period, and to the blossoming of Liberal and radical periodicals during the 1860's and 1870's.<sup>1</sup> In Chapter Two the labour newspapers of William Owen and John Thomas Morgan are placed in their specific historical contexts, and their histories as newspapers are narrated. Chapter Three considers the respective content structures of the Owen and the Morgan papers, and discusses their visual impact and the style of language in which they were written. In the Fourth Chapter the social geography of the readership is outlined, as are aspects of the education, literacy and self-help organisations of the readers. Letters to the Editor are analysed in order to locate the individuals and the groups of workers who were the papers' most loyal readers. Chapter Five examines the cost and expenditure structures of the two groups of newspapers, and evaluates their success as business ventures. Finally, Chapter Six discusses the roles played by the editors in the political and industrial activity of the great labour unrest of the early 1870's as labour journalists, and considers their functions and estimates their effectiveness as radical activists and as advocates of an ideology of labour.

1. In these fields, as in so many others touched upon in this thesis, I am particularly indebted to the work of A.J. Lee, especially Lee, A.J., The Origins of the Popular Press 1855 - 1914, (London, 1976). (Henceforth all books published in London, unless otherwise stated).



## CHAPTER ONE

### THE RADICAL PRESS

The radical labour newspapers of William Owen and John Thomas Morgan were not without precedent in the history of the British periodical press. Like many other oppositional and Liberal editors of the mid-Victorian period, Owen and Morgan were heirs to a long tradition of radical journalism, and both men recognised their debts to the courage and the resilience of earlier generations of newspapermen. From the mid 1850's onwards, moreover, the periodical press underwent an unprecedented wave of expansion, and the new technology gave fresh life to newspapers the views of which spanned the political spectrum. In this chapter the 'tradition' from which the Owen and Morgan papers emerged will be outlined, and reference will be made to the general context of radical journalism in the 1870's.

#### 1) The Radical Tradition.

In 1850 Fanny Mayne discovered to her horror that 'the working-classes of the country have a press of their own.'<sup>1</sup> This 'vicious and democratic press...infidel and blasphemous'<sup>2</sup>, was, she warned her contemporaries, threatening to 'undermine the foundations of mid-Victorian tranquility'<sup>3</sup>. Its insidious presence, its 'moral poison',<sup>4</sup> had, she inferred, already penetrated deeply into the culture of the 'Unknown Public'<sup>5</sup>. 'There is scarcely a house in the land', Mayne complained, 'where it does not

1. F. Mayne, 'The Literature of the Working Classes', Englishwoman's Magazine 5, 1850, p. 169.

2. F. Mayne, The Perilous Nature of the Penny Periodical Press, (1851), quoted from a letter attached to the pamphlet.

3. F. Mayne, 'The Literature', op. cit. p. 169.

4. *ibid.*

5. Consult 'The Unknown Public', Household Words, 21 August 1858 for a contemporary discussion of this concept.

2  
6  
find an entrance. It is the lower house of the "Fourth Estate of the Realm".

It is not too difficult to comprehend the nature of the prevailing sense of anxiety to which Mayne gave expression. Written only two years after revolutionary convulsions had toppled governments throughout Europe, the nightmare of a successful ultra-Radical challenge to authority still weighed heavily and vividly on the minds of both the right and many moderate reformers.<sup>7</sup> Even in Britain, where the main current of Chartism had subdued, if not been defused before 1848, lingering doubts concerning the potential volatility of the working-class remained. One source of concern was the continuing existence of a popular press of a strongly democratic persuasion which still appeared to advocate and reflect many of the seemingly subversive Owenite and Chartist aspirations of the 1830's and 1840's. Behind this particular concern lay the knowledge that, in a society without the facilities for mass telegraphic communications, the printed word remained society's single most important medium of expression. The cheap popular periodical was regarded by many as exercising a disproportionate influence over the politics, the industrial activity and the general attitudes of workers.

The genre of radical and working-class newspapers and periodicals to which Mayne referred possessed a long, and by today a well documented, history. The agitational handpress had been repressed by various forms of punitive taxation since 1712,<sup>8</sup> and its one hundred and forty three year struggle to free itself from the strictures of direct state control has been ably and extensively narrated by both contemporary and modern historians.<sup>9</sup>

6. F. Mayne, The Perilous Nature, op. cit., p.15.

7. E.J. Hobsbawm, The Age of Capital, (1975), p.17.

8. A. Aspinall, Politics and the Press 1780-1950, (1973), p.16.

9. Notably F.K. Hunt, The Fourth Estate, (1850); J. Grant, The Newspaper Press: its Origin, Progress and Present Position, (1871); H.R. Fox Bourne, English Newspapers, (1887); G.B. Diblee, The Newspaper, (1913); W.H. Wickwar, The Struggle for the Freedom of the Press, (1928); A. Aspinall op.cit; H. Herd, The March of Journalism, (1952); F. Williams, Dangerous Estate, (1957); J. Wiener, The War of the Unstamped, (Ithaca 1969); P. Hollis, The Pauper Press, (1970); S. Harrison, Poor Men's Guardians, (1974); C.D. Collet, History of the Taxes on Knowledge, (1933); G. Boyce, J. Curran and P. Wingate, Newspaper History: from the 17th century to the present day, (1978).

Newspaper taxation increased slowly between 1712 and 1819.

Nevertheless, an independent democratic press had developed in Britain from the 1750's onwards in spite of these attempts at control. This radical press gathered momentum during the French Revolution and throughout the Napoleonic Wars and the acute economic depression which followed. In 1819, as part of a general package of state repression of radical movements, taxation on newspapers was again increased. Clauses of two of the Six Acts of that year stipulated that a fourpenny duty was to be added to the price of

'all pamphlets and papers containing any public news, intelligence, or occurrences ... printed ... and published periodically ... at intervals not exceeding twenty six days ... or ... for sale for less sum than six pence ...'<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, in order to avoid the

'abuses arising from the Publication of blasphemous and seditious libels',<sup>11</sup>

heavy deposits were demanded of every publisher as security in the event of proven libel.<sup>12</sup>

For Lord Ellenborough and the Government the dangers, both political and social, of an independent radical newspaper press were exemplified by William Cobbetts' Political Register, and following his flight to the relative safety of the United States in 1817, by a constellation of imitators. These included the Gorgon, the Cap of Liberty and Medusa's Head, Wooller's Black Dwarf, Carlile's Republican, Hone's Reformist Register, Sherwin's Political Register and Hunt's serialised Memoirs. The editors, publishers and distributors of these newspapers, and others of their ilk, waged a war of resistance and disobedience against governments and the judiciary which

10. Hansard Vol. XLI (1819), cols. 1677-78.

11. ibid.

12. V.S.Berridge, 'Popular Journalism and Working Class Attitudes 1854-1886: A Study of Reynolds's Newspaper, Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper and the Weekly Times', Unpublished Ph.D.thesis, Birkbeck College, University of London 1976. p.13.

lasted until the end of the 1820's, by which time the provisions of the Act of 1819 had been rendered largely unworkable. The applicability and effectiveness of the clauses of the Six Acts relating to newspapers were again tested in 1830 by the prosecution in the courts of William Carpenter's irregular Political Letters. Found guilty in May 1831, Carpenter and his Political Letters test case became the stormy centre of a new and resurgent political popular press, and many radicals took again to their pens and presses to challenge the legitimacy of the almost vestigial and anachronistic Newspaper Acts of 1819. Hetherington's Poor Man's Guardian and The Destructive, Carpenter and Cleave's Slap at the Church, the Fisaro, the Cosmopolite, Watson's Working Man's Friend, Carlile's Gauntlet and the Man, in addition to the various Owenite journals, including the Crisis of 1832, and many other lesser papers, re-established in the early 1830's a radical presence in the popular penny press. E.P. Thompson suggests that despite recurring prosecutions under the 1819 Acts, it was at this stage that the radical press first broke through to a mass circulation.<sup>13</sup>

Not all of these radical papers were written and published in London. The centrality of the metropolis in the publication of newspapers had been challenged by radicals as early as the late 1780's when Joseph Gales, a pioneer of the provincial radical press, founded the Sheffield Register. In his wake

'democratic journals in the provinces the Sheffield Register, Manchester Herald, Cambridge Intelligencer edited by Benjamin Flower, a Unitarian reformer, and the Leicester Herald - set new standards in provincial journalism, abandoning the paste-and-scissors copying of the London press, and presenting original editorial articles'.<sup>14</sup>

The diversity of the radical provincial press became fully apparent in the Chartist press of the late 1830's and the early 1840's. In addition to

13. E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, (1963), p. 789.

14. *ibid.* p. 151.

the London Despatch, the Operative, and the Charter, which were all published in London, Feargus O'Connor launched the Northern Star in Leeds in 1837, John Fraser the True Scotsman in Edinburgh in 1838, I.K.Douglas the Birmingham Journal in 1830 and Augustus H.Beaumont the Northern Liberator in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1837.<sup>15</sup>

In 1836, the reduction of newspaper duty to one penny removed much of the appeal and arguably much of the influence of the radical unstamped, as better produced and 'respectable' stamped newspapers became cheaply available to working people. Sales of stamped papers rose by over seventy per cent during the following six years, having risen by only thirty three per cent in the preceding twenty years.<sup>16</sup> The survival of some radical newspapers into the 1840's and 1850's, Berridge suggests, was due as much to their 'liberal inclusion of police court and ... criminal cases',<sup>17</sup> and other forms of sensational reporting as to their politics. In these decades, the campaign against the remaining newspaper duty was continued by a further middle-class led extra-Parliamentary agitation under the leadership of Milner Gibson's Association for Promoting the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge and the Newspaper Press Association. In 1852 and 1855 they secured the repeal of advertisement duty, and finally in July 1855 all newspaper taxation was abolished. The remaining paper duty was repealed in October 1861.

#### ii) The Expansion of the Nineteenth Century Popular Press.

From the early 1850's the British popular press underwent a period of dramatic expansion. Freed from the direct taxation newspaper managers began to introduce new developments in production and distribution methods to help increase the circulations of their papers and to make them legally

15. R.C.Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement 1837-1854, (1969 reprint of 1894 edition), p.18; R.Harrison G.Woolven and R.Duncan,

The Warwick Guide to British Labour Periodicals 1790-1970, (1977).

16. A.Aspinall op. cit. p.23.

17. V.S.Berridge, op.cit., p.24.

accessible to a large and growing working class market. From 1850 cheap paper was being made from wood pulp, and during the course of the century the craft of printing was 'transformed from a manual craft into a mechanised industry'.<sup>18</sup> Older cylinder printing machines into which paper was fed, folded and counted by hand were being superseded by rotary printing machines from the early 1860's. These printed more rapidly, folded, cut, pasted, counted and delivered the finished newspapers ready for distribution.<sup>19</sup> The establishment of the Reuters News Agency in 1840, the development of the telegraph, bought by the Post Office in 1870<sup>20</sup>, the cable and later the telephone quickened and improved the collection of news internationally. The rapid extension of the railway system in the early 1840's which, by 1844, brought the 'virtual completion of the main-line system',<sup>21</sup> also contributed to the country-wide distribution of the metropolitan papers. In 1870 the postal rate for newspapers was reduced from one penny per four ounces to half a penny per six ounces of printed matter.<sup>22</sup>

These technological developments in the production and the distribution of newspapers were reflected in the increased circulations of newspapers. In the period 1853 to 1855 The Times increased its sales by fourteen thousand, one hundred and eighty eight, whilst the weekly Reynold's Newspaper increased its circulation by twenty one thousand.<sup>23</sup> More generally, James Grant estimated that the total circulation of newspapers in the United Kingdom rose from thirty eight and a half millions in 1831, when prices included the fourpenny newspaper duty, to approximately five hundred and

18. E.Howe, Newspaper Printing in the Nineteenth Century, (Privately Printed 1943), p. 43.

19. H.Tracy, The British Press, (1929), p. 16.

20. D.Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century, (1950), p.143.

21. S.G.Checkland, The Rise of Industrial Society in England 1815-1865, (1964). p.36.

22. F.Hitchman, The Newspaper Press, Quarterly Review October 1880, p.504.

23. J.Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party 1857-68, (1972), p.24.

fifty six millions in 1864, two hundred and five millions of these in London alone.<sup>24</sup> By 1874, United Kingdom totals had reached some six hundred and fifty millions.<sup>25</sup> The growth of the newspaper press in London was reciprocated in the provinces. One contemporary believed that 'to the Provincial Press is due the credit of having been the first to appreciate the enormous boom conferred by the reduced Press tariff'.<sup>26</sup>

The number of individual newspapers increased from one thousand, four hundred and fifty, of which one hundred and twenty two were dailies, in 1871, to one thousand five hundred and eighty five, of which one hundred and thirty<sup>were</sup> dailies in 1874, and one thousand, six hundred and ninety two, of which one hundred and forty five were dailies, in 1877.<sup>27</sup> In Wales the number of newspapers rose from nine in 1846 to sixty in 1871.<sup>28</sup> Postal delivery of newspapers rose from one hundred and nine million copies in 1871 to one hundred and twenty five million copies only five years later in 1876.<sup>29</sup> According to Mitchell's Directory, one thousand, five hundred and eighty five newspapers were published in 1874 with an aggregate circulation of six hundred and fifty million copies.<sup>30</sup> It was not unusual for such provincial newspapers as the Newcastle Daily Chronicle to sell upwards of forty thousand copies per day during the late 1870's.<sup>31</sup>

24. J. Grant, The Newspaper Press: its Origin, Progress and Present Position, (1871), Vol. II, p.321.

25. H.Whorlow, The Provincial Press Society 1836-86. A Jubilee Retrospect, (1886), p. 37.

26. Congregationalist 1871, quoted in E.Howe, The London Compositor, Documents relating to Wages, Working Conditions and Customs of the London Printing Trade 1785-1900, (1942) p. 680.

27. C.Mitchell and Co., Newspaper Press Directory, 1871-1877.

28. P.P. (c.8242) XXXIII 741. Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire 1896, Appendix C.

29. H.Whorlow, op. cit., p.37.

30. ibid.

31. F.Hitchman, op. cit., p. 515.

### iii) Periodicals of Mid-Victorian Labour.<sup>4</sup>

How and in what ways did what we have termed loosely the 'radical tradition' of newspaper journalism survive the extraordinary expansion of the popular press from the mid-Victorian period onwards? There are, broadly speaking, two ways to interpret the evidence. Firstly, it may be argued that the strategy advocated by Mayne and her colleagues of combating the influence of the radical press ideologically through the publication of periodicals for the working class which promulgated and upheld the dominant values of Victorian society,<sup>32</sup> and the increasing availability to working class readers of less inflammatory national and provincial newspapers, had by the 1860's triumphed finally over the independent 'pauper press' of the early Nineteenth Century. Haywood's prophetic evidence to a Government Select Committee in 1851 that 'beneficial effects would result to the population of the country from the free publication of news'<sup>33</sup> had apparently been vindicated, and the threat to the stability of Victorian state and society posed by the existence of a continuing tradition of subversive working class journalism had been successfully outmanoeuvred. What little did emerge from the period of mid-century consolidation of Victorian ruling-class power was emasculated, confused, dilatory and 'moderate'. Like the offensive institutions of the working-class in general, the tradition of radical journalism had been successfully 'warrenred from end to end'.<sup>34</sup> The survivors were Liberal scandal-mongers, expressions of a defeated movement and a contented class.

There is, however, a second interpretation. A recent survey of British labour periodicals<sup>35</sup> indicates that the independent radical press was

32. The True Briton, for example, or the publications of the Christian Knowledge and Religious Tract Societies; F. Mayne, The Perilous Nature op. cit., (esp. enclosed letter).

33. Report from the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps; together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence etc.', 1851, Evidence of Haywood (2526 - 2529).

34. E.P. Thompson, 'The Peculiarities of the English', The Poverty of Theory (1978), p.71.

35. R. Harrison, G. Woolven, R. Duncan, The Warwick Guide to British Labour Periodicals, op. cit.



thriving and in healthy condition during the 1860's and the 1870's.

Approximately three hundred and forty different newspapers, journals or other periodicals were published by and/or for working-class readers between 1850 and 1879, and an additional one hundred and ninety between 1880 and 1889. Compilers of the Warwick Guide to British Labour Periodicals subdivide these journals into three broadly defined groups for the purposes of classification. Those written for workers by workers or which were produced by an 'organised body consisting wholly or mainly of wage earners or collectively dependent employees',<sup>36</sup> fall into Group A. Group B consists of those periodicals which 'present themselves as being on the side of Labour against Capital, or of the Employee as against the Employer',<sup>37</sup> although not necessarily being 'produced by organised bodies of workers or collectively dependent employees'.<sup>38</sup> Finally, the C Group includes those periodicals which were written for workers by 'members of other social classes who sought to improve them, instruct them or entertain them'.<sup>39</sup> The titles which were published between 1850 and 1879 may thus be analysed in the following way.

Table 1.

Newspapers published 1850 to 1879 : Proportions  
in R. Harrison et al, classificatory Groups A, B, C.

<u>Group</u>	<u>Classified Titles</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
A	97	28.6
B	152	44.8
C	90	26.5
<u>Total</u>	<u>339</u>	<u>100</u>

It emerges from the table that periodicals of the 'B' Group, or those committed to the 'cause of Labour', dominate the 'working-class'

36. R.Harrison et al, op.cit., p. xiii.

37. ibid. p. xiii.

38. ibid. p. xiii.

39. ibid. p. xiv.

periodicals of the period. A similar pattern may be seen in an analysis of the papers categorised by the Warwick project for the following decade.

Table 2.

Newspapers published 1880 to 1889: Proportions  
in R. Harrison et al classificatory Groups A, B, C.

<u>Group</u>	<u>Classified Titles</u>	<u>% of Total.</u>
A	73	38.4
B	75	39.4
C	42	22.1
<u>Total</u>	<u>190</u>	<u>100</u>

The results of this survey indicate that the ideological offensive on the radical working class press advocated by, among others, F. Mayne may not have been as influential, numerically speaking, as she would have hoped, as papers of the 'C' group remained in a minority throughout the period. Moreover, far from being swamped by the expanding popular press, it is evident that radical papers for the working class reader developed in tandem with the remainder of the popular press from the 1850's onwards: they benefited from the same legislative reforms and shared the advantages of the new technology. This is not to suggest that the 'radical tradition' remained unchanged throughout the period. Important changes had occurred in their style as well as in their politics as the work of J.A.Epstein on the Chartist Northern Star, S. Coltham on the trade unionist Bee-Hive and V.S.Berridge on Reynold's Newspaper, Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper, the Weekly Times and the Victorian Sunday papers<sup>40</sup> clearly demonstrate. These changes as they relate to the mid-Victorian newspapers of W. Owen and J.T.Morgan will be discussed in greater detail in a later chapter.

40. J.A.Epstein, 'Feergus O'Connor and the Northern Star', International Review of Social History, Vol. XXI, 1970; S.Coltham, 'George Potter and the Bee-Hive Newspaper', (Unpub. D.Phil., Oxford 1956); V.S.Berridge, 'Popular Journalism and Working Class Attitudes 1854-1883: A Study of Reynold's Newspaper, Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper and the Weekly Times', op. cit.

The political papers: Liberal, radical and satirical journalism.

This section will delineate the patterns of development of liberal, radical or labour newspapers and journals which appeared during the three decades spanning the 1860's to the 1880's, particular attention being paid to those which appeared in localities along the North Staffordshire to South Wales industrial ellipse. For the purposes of analysis and contextual reference these periodicals have been grouped into four principal categories. It must be emphasised at the start of the exercise that this categorisation is not advanced as a suggested means of classifying the periodicals named below in any strict or permanent way. As Michael Wolff gently reminds us 'periodical literature may be compared to a vast wilderness, "without form<sup>41</sup>...". The categories employed below attempt only to lend a passing order to that formless phenomenon, the object being to convey a very general sense of context to the specific groups of newspapers and journals under discussion. Neither is the list of periodicals an exhaustive one. Those discussed, as the above title suggests, compose only a representative sample of the many hundreds which were published in Britain during the mid and late-Victorian period.

By the early 1870's many provincial newspapers had been captured politically by members and supporters of the Liberal Party,<sup>42</sup> and an analysis of left journalism during this period must begin with a brief overview of the achievements of the Liberal press. In November 1856 Cobden informed Sturge that 'the greatest human instrument for forming public opinion in England would be the penny daily press, and ... the best he and his friends could do would be to establish everywhere papers, professing the politics of the Star and the Manchester Examiner.'<sup>43</sup> Seventeen years later, in December 1873,

41. M. Wolff, 'Charting the Golden Stream', Victorian Periodical Newsletter No. 13, September 1971, p.23.

42. See page 12

43. J.Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party, op.cit. p.100.

the editor of the Manchester Examiner proudly pointed out to Lord Amberly that 'the Examiner is the organ of the forward Liberal Party'.<sup>44</sup> By this time there were a number of prominent Liberal provincial newspapers, among them Joseph Cowen's Newcastle Chronicle, 'the leading daily paper in the north east'.<sup>45</sup> The Newcastle Chronicle under the control of Cowen was perhaps an exception among Liberal newspapers. Harrison, Woolven and Duncan point out its 'sympathy for craft unionism, co-operation, and working class self-help in general',<sup>46</sup> and suggest that 'the temper of its radicalism, even if middle class, went far beyond that of the conventional Manchester School. Along with peace, retrenchment and reform, it advocated a particular form of class alliance linked to the claims of continental radicalism and nationalism'.<sup>47</sup> In general, however, Liberal papers were rarely if ever 'owned or managed by wage earners, and rarely ... articulated any conception of distinct working class interest opposed to those of other classes or seen to be clearly distinct from them. Nor did they address themselves to wage earners as such, except incidentally or occasionally'.<sup>48</sup> This appraisal of the Liberal press applies equally to large influential newspapers such as the Manchester Examiner and to the publications of local Liberal Associations, such as the Birmingham Nechel's Ward Paper of the Birmingham Liberal Association which first appeared in September 1873.

Of the 'advanced Liberal' political papers, the most notable was perhaps the Reformer, published in Edinburgh between August 1868 and February 1875. A penny weekly edited by David Lewis, a local councillor and 'advocate of Liberal measures and rights of the working classes for the last twenty years',<sup>49</sup> the Reformer published detailed reports of Scottish trade unionism

44. Lewis Sergeant to Lord Amberley, 26 December 1873, quoted in H.W. McCready, 'Victorian Periodicals in the Amberley Papers', Victorian Periodicals Newsletter No. 10, Nov. 1970, p.34.

45. J. Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party, op.cit., p.100.

46. R. Harrison et al., op.cit., p. xv.

47. *ibid.*

48. *ibid.*

49. *ibid.* p. 453.

and counted amongst its contributors Ernest Jones and George Potter.<sup>50</sup> The National Reformer was frequently more outspokenly Radical than the Edinburgh Reformer. Published initially by Holyoake and edited in turn by Joseph Barker, Watts and Charles Bradlaugh, the paper survived until October 1893, and was, in the 1870's 'an organ of Republican Clubs, and the Land and Labour League'.<sup>51</sup> Its politics were explicitly 'Radical, progressive, secularist and republican'.<sup>52</sup>

Indeed there had been since at least the early 1830's a tradition of republican journalism in Britain. This tradition was continued in the mid 1850's by such publications as the Republican Record, produced by the Newcastle Republican Brotherhood. This body included amongst its more prominent members G.J.H. Arney, previously editor of the Red Republican and Friend of the People between March 1851 and April 1852, and Joseph Cowen, later to become editor of the Newcastle Chronicle. In the early 1870's, W. Harrison Riley issued the International Herald, which survived until 1874, and, in a different form, until 1875, in order to provide a 'special organ of such societies as are not specially represented by the Beehive or the National Reformer'.<sup>53</sup> In 1872 the International Herald became for a brief period the official organ of the British section of the International Working Men's Association. Other republican journals included the Potteries Republican : A Monthly Journal, Advocating the Interests of All Classes, with a View to the Equality of All which was published in Hanley from December 1874, and printed by H. Adams for Henry Wedgewood,<sup>54</sup> a frequent contributor to Owen's Potteries Examiner, and the Republican Chronicle : A Monthly Journal Advocating Democratic Principles, and Recording Republican Work and Progress, published

50. *ibid.*

51. *ibid.* p.348.

52. *ibid.*

53. *ibid.* 228.

54. *ibid.* p.432.

by E. Truelove and printed and edited by George Sandring from April 1875 to February 1897.<sup>55</sup>

During the Nineteenth Century satirical and comic papers also acquired a degree of popularity, and their barbed humour was often directed explicitly at political or social issues. In addition to H. Nicholson's and William Owen's Spice, D.J. Gray has estimated that four hundred and three 'Comic Periodicals' were published in Great Britain between 1800 and 1900. A number of such periodicals appeared in Staffordshire, the Midlands and South Wales during the three decades of the 1860's, the 1870's and the 1880's. In Birmingham, following the Wasp of 1832 and Sam Sly's Birmingham Budget of February to October 1850, a further nine comic and satirical periodicals were published in the city between 1868 and 1888. They include the following: The Third Member for Birmingham from July to November 1868, Toby from August to December 1868, Gridiron from September to October 1868 and again from June 1879 to December 1881, Brum from September to December 1869, Dart and Midland Figaro from October 1876 to June 1881, thereafter until 1911, The Grumbler of 1878, The Owl from January 1879 to September 1911, Phonographic Punch from November 1884 to May 1886 and Peeping Tom in Birmingham from September 1887 to March 1888. In addition, the Midland Jackdaw was published in Leicester in 1879. Following the failure of Spice in the early 1880's, the Staffordshire Weekly Press was commenced in February 1888 and survived, renamed Maggie and Merrie Maggie only until October of the same year. In Wolverhampton, the Oddman appeared in 1889. In South Wales there were only two papers of this kind, both being published in Swansea. The Ferret, appearing between 1870 and April 1879, was a keen critic of Morgan's papers, and the Swansea Boy survived only from 1878 to 1881.<sup>56</sup>

55. *ibid.* p.462.

56. D.J. Gray, 'A List of Comic Periodicals Published in Great Britain 1800-1900 with a prefatory essay', Victorian Periodicals Newsletter March 1972, No. 15, pp. 2 - 39.

### Trade Unionist Journalism.

Members of many trade unions were convinced of the advantages of possessing and controlling journals which could popularise and help further their own trade interests. By the early 1870's, these groups included not only skilled trades but also agricultural workers and coal miners. Furthermore, not all trade unionist journalism was conducted with the explicit approval or assistance of trade union leaderships at local, regional or 'national' levels.

The relatively strong organisations of skilled trades were in a better position to sustain the financial cost of an independent press than were many other newer or less skilled trades unions. Printers and compositors in the Provincial Typographical Association produced their own paper, the Typographical Societies' Monthly Circular from 1852 onwards.<sup>57</sup>

The Amalgamated Society of Engineers/<sup>(A.S.E.)</sup> also produced a Monthly Report, possibly from the time of the union's foundation in 1851.<sup>58</sup> The proceedings of the A.S.E. were also being reported, and its principles advocated and popularised, in the Operative, a weekly paper published by G. Berger and George Vickers during 1851 and 1852. More recently formed trade organisations also concerned themselves with the acquisition of independent trade journals. The National Amalgamated Malleable Ironworkers Association of Great Britain, formed in 1868 under the General Secretaryship of John Kane, started its own fortnightly trade paper the Ironworkers Journal in January 1869. It was edited by Kane in Darlington until his death in 1876.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, a much smaller union representing finished metal workers in the Black Country of South Staffordshire and North Worcestershire, the National Association of Nut and Bolt Makers, formed in 1877, produced its own journal, the Nut and Bolt Maker's Journal during the late 1870's, edited by Richard Juggins,

57. R.Harrison et al, op.cit., p.563. from 1875 retitled Provincial Typographical Circular, then Typographical Circular from 1877 to 1963.

58. ibid. p. 9.

59. E. Taylor, 'John Kane', in J. Bellamy and J. Saville (Eds.) Dictionary of Labour Biography, Vol. III (1976), p. 121.

President of the Union.<sup>60</sup>

During the early 1870's, moreover, groups of unskilled and previously unorganised or partially-organised workers began to produce trade union journals. The National Agricultural Labourers' Union (N.A.L.U.) published the Labourers' Union Chronicle in June 1872 and continued to produce it, as the National Agricultural Labourers' Chronicle and Industrial Pioneer until April 1877. It was edited by J.E.M. Vincent, Treasurer of the N.A.L.U. at the Steam Printing Offices, Priory Terrace, Leamington, Warwickshire. The paper also had offices in London - S. Palmer, "Index to the Times Office", 335, Strand WC - and Manchester - A. Heywood and Son, Oldham Street.<sup>61</sup> In January 1875 Vincent inserted the new subtitle 'An Independent Advocate of the British Toilers Rights to Free Land, Freedom from Priestcraft and from the Tyranny of Capital'.<sup>62</sup> It is instructive to compare this subtitle to that adopted by Morgan for the Workman's Advocate in July 1875.<sup>63</sup> A paper of similar character, the Labour League Examiner, official paper of the Amalgamated Labour League, was edited by the union's General Secretary.<sup>64</sup>

Of the large groups of relatively powerful workers who did not possess an official press during the early 1870's, the most prominent were without doubt the coal miners. During the 1860's the British Miner attempted to become such an official paper, proclaiming itself 'A Publication devoted to the Interests of the Working Miners of the United Kingdom'.<sup>65</sup> From its foundation in September 1862 until August 1865 the British Miner

60. Kelly's Directory of Birmingham etc. op.cit., 1878, p.535; J.Bellamy and J. Saville (Eds) op.cit., Vol.1 (1972), p.207.

61. Labourers Union Chronicle 7 June 1873.

62. *ibid.* 2 January 1875.

63. Workman's Advocate, 23 July 1875, i.e. An Independent Organ Advocating the Rights of Labour, Freedom from Class Legislation, Priestcraft and Tyranny', also his Introduction to the Star of the West which promises that the paper will 'Advocate the right of the British Toiler to Free Land Freedom from Priestcraft and the Tyranny of the Capitalist'.

64. See p. 62 below.

65. R.Harrison et al., op.cit., p.51.



was edited by John Towers, a fierce opponent of miners' leader Alexander MacDonald. Subsequently, from 1865 to 1866 it was edited by a 'stand-in' editor, J.B.Leno, and during this period the paper entered a more political phase. It was discontinued, by then renamed Commonwealth, in July 1867. Although initially professing to be a miners' paper, it dropped the Miner from its title in September 1865, and made a serious effort to become the British organ of the International. Among its backers in 1865 were Friedrich Lessner, tailor, William Randall Cremer, joiner, Edwin Coulson, bricklayer, Robert Applegarth, joiner, John George Eccarius, tailor, William John Morgan, shoemaker, Karl Marx, described simply as 'Dr.Phil.', Herman F. Jung, watchmaker, Grant Facey, painter, William Stansby, tailor, John Weston, handrail manufacturer and Edwin Shelley Mantz, 'literary writer'.<sup>66</sup>

In the early 1870's, however, the new miners' union, the Amalgamated Association of Miners (A.A.M.) explored the possibilities of producing a newspaper of its own. At its conference in Wigan in January 1870, an 'animated conversation' was occasioned by a discussion on a 'Proposed Miners' Newspaper'. Eventually, it was agreed to continue the agitation, and to endeavour to make arrangements with a newspaper proprietor to issue a paper advocating the views of the association, it being left to the Executive to make inquiries in the various districts, and to submit a proposal to the council of the National Association, in order, if possible, to come to a joint agreement'.<sup>67</sup> If some form of formal rapprochement between the A.A.M. and the National Association of Mineworkers (N.A.M.) did not materialise in the early 1870's, it was clearly not due to any reluctance of will on behalf of the A.A.M., as the proposals for a joint newspaper clearly shows.

During the A.A.M.'s next conference, held in Wrexham in April 1870,

66. Names, Addresses and Descriptions of Subscribers, Industrial Newspaper Company Ltd., 1865, P.R.O. BT31/1161/2475c.p.15.

67. Wigan Observer 8 January 1870.

another discussion took place on the 'miners' newspaper question'.<sup>68</sup>

Halliday 'urged that a journal would be the best way of laying questions before the miners, and would obtain a greater number of members for the association'.<sup>69</sup>

He had 'read the opinion of a gentleman connected with the press upon the point, who advised the publication of a monthly magazine. If needed', Halliday added, 'the publication could be merged into a weekly one'.<sup>70</sup>

Some delegates, however, feared the expense of such a venture, although Halliday himself felt assured that 'they could easily give a guarantee to a publisher to take five thousand copies of a twopenny magazine, which might be disposed of without trouble'.<sup>71</sup>

Eventually, seventeen delegates voted in favour of the publication of a newspaper, and only seven against.<sup>72</sup> A further resolution calling for the production of a twopenny periodical was carried by 'a large majority' of twenty two to three.<sup>73</sup>

Finally, 'some humorous proceedings followed in "christening" the magazine that would be issued, and it was resolved, on the motion of Mr. Bullis, seconded by Mr. Aldred, that it should be called the Miner's Journal'.<sup>74</sup>

The Miner's Journal, however, was never produced.

In January 1873 Joseph Gould, previously a prominent compositor trade unionist in London, began to print and publish the Miners' Advocate and Record in Middlesbrough. The proprietors and editor of this penny weekly paper were said to be 'working miners', and they sought an audience among the 'militant coal and ironstone miners in Northumberland and Durham'.<sup>75</sup>

The paper was discontinued in October 1874 due to general lack of support and, according to the editor, the hostile response of the leaders of the north east region of the N.A.M.<sup>76</sup>

Similarly in Coventry the Miner's Weekly News

68. *ibid.* 22 April 1870.

69. *ibid.*

70. *ibid.*

71. *ibid.*

72. *ibid.*

73. *ibid.*

74. *ibid.*

75. R.Harrison et al, *op.cit.*, 318.

76. Miners' Advocate and Record 31 October 1874.

was begun in August 1873 by H.J.Hodson. Intended principally for the coal miners of the Midlands, the actual readership of the Miner's Weekly News overlapped with that of the Examiner series until its discontinuation in January 1874. It is clear that H.J.Hodson received as little encouragement from the A.A.M., in whose constituency he was largely operating, as the editor of the Miners' Advocate and Record received from the N.A.M. Consequently, these miners' papers survived for only twenty one months and five months respectively.

#### National Working Class and Popular Newspapers.

Of those journals and newspapers which sought to report general trade union or popular news to a 'national' readership, or a readership which was unconfined by locality or by trade, the most important during the mid to late-Victorian period was without doubt the Beehive. It survived for seventeen years between 1861 and 1878, 'an extraordinary length of life for a working-class paper of those days',<sup>77</sup> as S. Coltham rightly comments.

Founded by George Potter, its first editors were G.Troup and Robert Hartwell. In 1870 it was taken over by H.Solly, but was later edited and owned by Potter himself. The Beehive was of great importance to contemporary reformers and trade unionists alike: 'until 1865 it was the organ of the London Trades Council, and for the last ten months of this period, of the First International as well .... During the eighteen-sixties, individual unions that adopted the Beehive ... included Macdonald's National Association of Mineworkers, while other bodies included the Labour Representation League. Throughout the Labour Laws campaign of 1871 - 5, it was the organ of the Trades Union Congress and its Parliamentary Committee. It was also, of course, the organ of the London Working Men's Association during the industrial and political struggles of 1866 - 8'.<sup>78</sup> The paper was also adopted as the official organ of the A.A.M.

77. S. Coltham, 'The Beehive Newspaper: its Origins and Early Struggles'; in A.Briggs and J.Saville, Essays in Labour History, (1967), p.174.

78. S.Coltham, op. cit., p. 174.

in October, 1870. The BeeHive's often strained and fluctuating relationships with those leading institutions of British Labour are well enough known.<sup>79</sup> In spite of its wide trade union and radical support and its evident popularity with working class leaders in many parts of the country, the BeeHive could not always be as valuable and as relevant to a hollow-ware presser in Hanley, an agricultural labourer in Gloucestershire or a collier in Merthyr Tydfil as it was to a builder or a carpenter in the metropolis. For like such trade papers as the Ironworkers Journal, the BeeHive also related to a specific, if rather broader, group of relatively privileged trade unionists. It was William Owen's opinion that the reason 'why the BeeHive had failed to satisfy, was that it could not grasp general matters, and local trade news also, which alone could ensure its success'.<sup>80</sup> Notwithstanding Owen's provincially-viewed criticism, the BeeHive was amongst the most successful of working class newspapers of the period, and was of considerably more help to the contemporary institutions of labour than, for example, such papers as the British Labour Advocate, 'the organ of expression for All Societies Connected with the Amelioration of the Present Distressed State of the Labour Class', published by Jason Harles and the Newspaper Publishing Company on 4 June 1870 and which does not appear to have survived its opening issue.<sup>81</sup> 'National' journals concerned centrally with working class institutions other than trade unions included the Workmen's Club Journal, and Official Gazette of the Working Men's Club and Institute Union, published weekly between May 1875 and February 1878 to promote social improvement among working class members of the Club movement. Similar themes were not infrequently adopted in such local newspapers as the Potteries Daily Express, which first appeared in April 1873, printed and published for the proprietors by George William Spencer at 23 Crown Bank Hanley to 'advocate ... popular education, Temperance,

79. Consult S. Coltham, *ibid.*

80. Labour Press, Miners' and Workmen's Examiner 11 April 1874.

81. British Labour Advocate 4 June 1870.

Working Men's Clubs and every agency for the amelioration of the condition of society'.<sup>82</sup>

Papers with considerably higher circulations, though of a different quality to the BeeHive, were also read by significant numbers of working people during this period. Amongst the most important were such weekly or Sunday papers as Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper, begun in November 1842, the Weekly Times, begun January 1847 and Reynolds's Newspaper, begun May 1850. Penny papers, they all 'rapidly broke through to mass circulation'.<sup>83</sup> V.S.Berridge has rightly criticised both standard press histories and labour historians alike for neglecting the Sunday press or for regarding them, unjustly, as being 'of relatively small significance'.<sup>84</sup> Berridge's work demonstrates that

'An analysis of readership patterns of three of the most widely read - Reynolds's, Lloyd's and the Weekly Times - gives all a strongly working-class readership, with an emphasis (or perhaps over-emphasis) on skilled artisan occupations. There were individual variations - Reynolds's, for instance, had large numbers of readers in the army and navy as well as its complement of skilled workers; and Lloyd's had a considerable following among small shopkeepers, many themselves barely removed from the ranks of the working class, and also some female readers, most obviously among clothing workers and servants.'<sup>85</sup>

These weekly newspapers did not aim exclusively at an organised working class readership, nor did they depend financially upon trade unions at local, regional or national levels. Thomas Wright commented that the BeeHive

82. Potteries Daily Express 18 April 1873.

83. V.S.Berridge, 'Popular Sunday Papers and mid-Victorian Society', in G.Boyce, J. Curran and P. Wingate (Eds.), Newspaper History from the Seventeenth Century to the present day, (1978), p.249.

84. *ibid.* p. 247.

85. *ibid.* p.249.

had a much lower circulation than Reynolds's for the following reasons:

'firstly it does not season high, after the fashion of Reynolds's; secondly, it appeals to a higher degree of intelligence than that which leads a man to admire Reynolds's can be; and thirdly, because it does not, except in a very limited degree, combine the functions of a general newspaper with those of a political organ'.<sup>86</sup>

The latter comment clearly echoes William Owen's sentiments of April 1874.

Ultimately, however, Wright held that

'the Beehive may be described as the organ of that faction of the politically inclined strata of the working classes whose organ Reynolds's is not'.<sup>87</sup>

Nevertheless, as a Liberal newspaper, Reynolds's was widely read by party activists in North Staffordshire in the early 1870's, and in March 1873 G.W.R.Reynolds was among the four candidates for nomination as the Liberal representative of the Stoke on Trent Labour Representation League.<sup>88</sup> According to Berridge, however, Reynolds's was by the 1870's in some difficulty its provincial base was being eroded and correspondence from Manchester, Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield dropped off sharply, although the paper's influence remained strong in areas of the industrial east Midlands.<sup>89</sup> It may not be wholly insignificant that Morgan chose to regard his Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr as the 'Welsh Reynolds's'.<sup>90</sup> As Berridge correctly points out, these papers were 'a new and complicating factor in the establishment of a labour press',<sup>91</sup> from the 1850's onwards. For in both Reynolds's and Lloyd's, she argues, 'financial advantage and the manipulation of political feelings for profit was the norm .... The working class paper had become big business'.<sup>92</sup>

86. T.Wright, Our New Masters, (1873, repr.1969), p.347.

87. *ibid.*

88. Potteries Examiner 29 March 1873.

89. V.S.Berridge, 'Popular Journalism and Working Class Attitudes 1854-1886: A Study of Reynolds's Newspaper, Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper and the Weekly Times', Unpub. Ph.D.Thesis, Birkbeck College, London, 1976, p.137

90. Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr 30 January 1875.

91. V.S.Berridge, 'Popular Journalism', *op.cit.*, p.264.

92. *ibid.* p.264.

### Local Working Class Newspapers.

Not every newspaper with an eye to popular taste, however, succumbed to financial pressures by indulging in the circulation-boosting sensationalism of the Reynolds's or Lloyd's variety during the 1860's and 1870's. Indeed some papers managed to steer clear of both overt sensationalist journalism and of the total commitment to individual trade unions characterized by periodicals such as the Ironworkers Journal. One paper which succeeded in doing so was the Glasgow Sentinel. Described in a recent survey as 'the main working class newspaper in Scotland,'<sup>93</sup> it was begun in October 1850 and continued until its demise in December 1877. In May 1851 the paper was purchased by Owenite Robert Buchanan, but from 1860 was edited by a prominent figure of Scottish labour, Alexander Campbell. Like the radical Manchester Herald of 1792, the Glasgow Sentinel spared little room for 'articles of fashionable intent...'<sup>94</sup> preferring to combine industrial and trade union news with local Glaswegian and general news and popular fiction.

Newspapers in England and Wales also chose to adopt this policy, and three different examples typify, to a certain extent, three types of local working class newspapers which could be found circulating among working class readers in the 1870's. Each, in their own way, attempted to combine the functions of political papers and trade union journals with local and general newspapers. Tarian y Gweithiwr, the Worker's Shield, a Welsh language publication, was one such local working class newspaper which placed great emphasis on one particular industry, in spite of its general title. Begun by John Mills and Francis Lynch in Aberdare in 1875, Tarian y Gweithiwr quickly became regarded 'as the organ of the Welsh miners.'<sup>95</sup> Mills was born in Llanidloes on 15 January 1834<sup>96</sup>, and began work there as a weaver at the age of eight years. As a youth he was apprenticed as a printer at Idrissyn's

93. R.Harrison et al, op. cit., 192.

94. E.P.Thompson, The Making, op.cit., p.152.

95. Western Mail 19 October 1925.

96. Y Darian 29 January 1925.

office in Llanidloes, but in 1860, on the invitation of Robin Ddu, moved to Merthyr.<sup>97</sup> In 1862 Hills began work as a printer on the Gwladgarwr journal in Aberdare, and in 1872 established with Francis Lynch, also a printer at the Gwladgarwr, and Davies, an independent newspaper edited, printed and published by the three. Intended initially to 'safeguard the interests of the colliers of South Wales in the face of the attack upon them by the oppressive capitalists of the day'<sup>98</sup> and to 'serve the Welsh Working Class, to whom we feel proud to belong'<sup>99</sup>, the paper nonetheless developed a strong local orientation, and in its 'golden decade - from 1880 to 1890', it sold a consistent fifteen thousand copies each week,<sup>100</sup> before losing much of its support and popularity due to the anti-war position of its editor, T. Tywi Jones before and during the First World War.<sup>101</sup>

The Birmingham Radical Times, on the other hand, emphasised not a particular group of workers, but a particular brand of politics in its local reports. A tradition of radical local journalism had been developed in Birmingham at least since May 1855 with the publication of the Birmingham Daily Press. Printed and published by Charles Shelton Butcher until September 1856, then by William Harris until the paper's discontinuation in August 1858, the Birmingham Daily Press was insistent on the fact that 'the word Provincial is ceasing to be a term of reproach: the culture of all parts of the country is fast becoming much the same'.<sup>102</sup> The paper, according to the Times 'one of the earliest Provincial papers'<sup>103</sup> of its kind, was started under the auspices of George Dawson, M.A. who provided most of the inspiration and the money for the enterprise. Dawson, born in London on 24 February 1821 and educated in Glasgow, was a Baptist minister at Rickmansworth

97. *ibid.* 22 October 1925.

98. *ibid.* 29 January, 1925.

99. Tarian y Gweithiwr 15 January 1875.

100. Y Darian 29 January 1925.

101. *ibid.*

102. Birmingham Daily Press 7 May 1855.

103. Times 1 December 1876.



and Mt. Zion, Birmingham until he 'renounced all doctrinal or sectarian views in favour of the broad principles of Christianity',<sup>104</sup> in 1847.

Thereafter he built his own non-sectarian Church of the Saviour in Birmingham, was a member of the Birmingham School Board from 1870 onwards, and was 'one of the original founders of the National Education League',<sup>105</sup>. He was also an active Radical and republican, condemned by the

Shrewsbury Journal as a 'great religious nondescript, whose "advanced" views are the delight of the out-and-out Birmingham Radicals'.<sup>106</sup> The failure of the Birmingham Daily Press did not deter him, and he remained acutely interested in all forms of radical journalism in the city. In December 1868, for example, a new 'Working Class Paper for Birmingham and the Midland Counties',<sup>107</sup> was planned by a group of radicals based at 141 Cato Street, Birmingham. According to their Prospectus they 'intended to establish a Working Class Weekly Newspaper (upon the Co-operative Principle) for the Midland Counties generally, but especially to meet the wants of the vast industrial population in and around Birmingham'.<sup>108</sup> The 'Working Men's Paper', however, did not materialise, and a radical local paper did not appear in Birmingham until September 1876.

The Radical Times was a weekly paper printed and published by William Payne for the Radical Times Co-operative Newspaper Company, and was in politics to 'be thoroughly Radical ... whilst as a "Trade Unionist" it will promote principles of unity amongst workmen...'.<sup>109</sup> George Dawson, again, was prominent amongst its supporters and promoters. The Co-operative Company's founding Hon. Secretary was Charles C. Cattell, a republican, founder and Secretary to the Birmingham Eclectic Institute<sup>110</sup>

104. Times 1 December 1876.

105. ibid.

106. Eddowes's Shrewsbury Journal and Salopian Journal 22 October 1873.

107. Prospectus, 'Working Men's Paper', December, 1868, Birmingham Trades Council and other allied Labour organisations, circulars, leaflets etc. 1866 -, p. 2, Birmingham City Library.

108. ibid.

109. Radical Times 18 November 1876.

110. Birmingham Daily Press 8 June 1855.

and manager of G. Marshall and Co's General Foundry works in Birmingham. Following his resignation in December 1876, Josiah Cund was appointed to the post.<sup>111</sup> Dawson was 'an early benefactor of the Radical Times ... despite his severe loss in connection with the Daily Press',<sup>112</sup> and his death in November 1876 came as a severe blow to the paper and its producers.<sup>113</sup> The paper was discontinued in January 1877.<sup>114</sup> Reports in the Radical Times were deeply concerned with the political issue of republicanism, the Birmingham Labour Association and a misconceived notion of Joseph Chamberlain's 'Communism'.<sup>115</sup> As a committed republican organ, however, it remained a local paper. Of its thirty five agents in November 1876 only eight lay outside the west Midlands, and the local-republican emphasis of the paper was expressed clearly by one correspondent, a local collier, who assured his readers that 'I have written for the information of my own class, and I have not intended it to apply outside my immediate district'.<sup>116</sup>

The Kidderminster Shuttle adopted a more balanced approach to its politics, its trade unionism and to its appeal to popular taste. Founded and edited by the Reverend Edward Parry, of the Grammar School House, Wolverly, a Unitarian with republican sympathies, and printed by P. and G.K. Parry,<sup>117</sup> the Kidderminster Shuttle was, from its foundation in February 1870, a truly local journal'.<sup>118</sup> Editorial policy distinguished between political impartiality and independence, virtues of which Parry approved, and neutrality, of which he did not approve. 'We do not understand neutrality on any great subject of interest to the human mind and conscience',<sup>119</sup> he wrote in the first issue of his penny paper. Thus whilst remaining primarily a good 'Weekly Journal of Local and General News',<sup>120</sup> Parry

111. Radical Times 30 December 1876.

112. *ibid.* 2 December 1876.

113. See Cattell in National Reformer 16 December 1876; obituary in the Times 1 December 1876.

114. Radical Times 20 January 1877, (Vol.i. no.17).

115. *ibid.* 6 January 1877.

116. *ibid.* 18 November 1876, 6 January 1877.

117. Kidderminster Shuttle 8 February 1870.

118. *ibid.* 12 February 1870.

119. *ibid.*

120. *ibid.* 8 February 1870 (an experimental issue of the Queen's Speech).

popularised the activities both of such radical groups as the Kidderminster Radical Association<sup>121</sup> and the Kidderminster Republican Club,<sup>122</sup> and of such trade unions as the Carpet Weavers' Association<sup>123</sup> and the local branches of the Labourers Union.<sup>124</sup>

As the above survey seeks to demonstrate, the working class press of the mid to late Nineteenth Century was a rich and diverse phenomenon. It was not homogenous nor did it lend itself easily to categorisation. In character it ranged from journals with extreme radical and republican sympathies to local Liberal newspapers, from papers which emphasised popular sensationalism to those which advocated the virtues of trade unionism. This press embodied both the traditions of early nineteenth century oppositional journalism and the newer values of an expanding national and provincial mid-Victorian popular press, and to a large extent owed its existence to the conditions created by the two phenomena.

The labour newspapers of William Owen and John Thomas Morgan emerged from a confluence of similar sets of preconditions, and their specific histories will be considered at greater length in the following chapters. These newspapers deserve particular attention principally because they constituted the most systematic attempt to create an alternative system of working class newspapers in Britain during the early and mid-1870's.

To the editors this meant that their newspapers were to be read by, and owned by, working people and their families. They were to be the papers of the working class, organic components of the struggles of mid-Victorian labour. The thesis will attempt to evaluate the success of the venture, and of the significance of the roles played by journalists in the labour unrest of the early 1870's. Despite considerable differences in

distributed gratis preceding the first issue of the paper  
on 12 February 1870)

- 121. E. g. *ibid.* 26 July 1873.
- 122. E.g. *ibid.* 11 October 1873.
- 123. E.g. *ibid.* 9 April 1870.
- 124. E.g. *ibid.* 16 August 1873.

format and in style, the Owen and the Morgan papers will be considered together throughout the thesis because of their striking geographical, financial and ideological connections and similarities. It will also provide an opportunity to compare and to contrast the respective approaches to the profession of two editors working within the one milieu.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LABOUR NEWSPAPERS 1843-1892

The origins of the papers of W.Owen and J.T.Morgan are diverse and complex. This chapter will outline the pattern of development of the two groups of working-class newspapers in turn.

#### i) William Owen

##### a) The Potters' Examiner and Workman's Advocate 1843 - 1867.

The origins of Owen's 'Labour Newspaper System' were firmly embedded in a long tradition of trade union journalism in the Potteries, and could be traced back directly to the Potters' Examiner and Workman's Advocate first issued on Saturday 2 December 1843. In that year the potters of North Staffordshire had established a 'Printing Establishment, one of the best in the Staffordshire Potteries, at which they print their own trades organ, .. and execute the principal business of the benefit societies of the neighbourhood'<sup>1</sup>. The small eight paged penny paper, containing no advertisements and sub-titled 'God and our Right', declared itself to be the 'organ of a trade society', and renounced all politics and sectarianism. Its stated object was 'to defend, in the purest feelings of justice and equity, the interests of labour, without infringing on the rights of capital'. The journal was dedicated 'to the producers of wealth - the great source of all capital - the very foundation of all social existence', and made it known that

'we do not publish our little journal for profit.

We care not if the receipts should not cover the outlay. We come before the public as the defenders of the sacred rights of labour, and in that capacity, we care not if the sale of our publication be small, for we have the power, behind us, that will make its CIRCULATION great'<sup>2</sup>.

1. W. Evans, Art and History of the Potting Business, (Shelton, 1846) p.xi.

2. Potters' Examiner and Workman's Advocate 2 December 1843.

The journal was printed for the Central Committee of the United Branches of Operative Potters by J. Johnson, C. Molineux and J. Bourne, trustees of the Potters Joint Stock Emigration Society and Savings Fund, Miles Bank, Shelton.<sup>3</sup> The paper was thus owned jointly by the union of pottery trades, a federal association of local pottery societies 'based on the same principles as the U.S. of America, each branch being a separate state, and each branch board a state congress'.<sup>4</sup> The Central Committee, or General Board of management, conducted all the business of the societies without handling any of their funds, with the exception of a halfpenny a week subscription to defray incidental expenses.<sup>5</sup> The Joint Stock Emigration Society on the other hand was distinct from the union, its object being to 'open the valve and let the pent up labour escape'.<sup>6</sup> The underlying assumption of the Emigration Society was that the improvement of working potters

'was not now a matter of strikes and struggles against capital, but a cool determination to remove the surplus labour from the Pottery districts of this Empire .... Make labour scarce and you make it valuable - make it valuable and you make the working man respectable'.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, although structurally independent of the trade unions, the Emigration Society was held by the organised potters of North Staffordshire to be

'the crowning feature in the progress of our cause. It completes our Union! Without it we should be a rope of sand, with six hundred nobsticks battering it to pieces!!'<sup>8</sup>

The potters' journal emerged during a period of acute unrest in the Potteries and in the country generally. It was established within months

3. *ibid.* 3 July 1847

4. Webb Trade Union MSS, Vol. XLIV, Item 3, Folio 199.

5. *ibid.* folio 200.

6. *ibid.*

7. Potters' Examiner 15 June 1844.

8. Webb Trade Union MSS *op.cit.*, folio 200.

of the violent Chartist riots of 1842, when the houses of local magistrates were attacked and burnt by striking workers in the Potteries<sup>9</sup>, and in the year of O'Connor's trial and the Birmingham Chartist Convention. Seymour Tremenheere, a Commissioner to the Potteries reported to the Government in 1843 that the whole of the Potteries district was in a dangerous and politically unstable condition.

'There is want of adequate religion and general instruction, hence this state of distrust between men and masters. This distrust is increased by the kind of cheap periodical literature now circulating. Some of them are in the form of penny almanacs, by far the greater part of the matter contained in them being extracts from socialist writers. The Republican and Socialist literature of the Continent is plainly visible in its effects on the tone, language and doctrines of all the English publications. The new feature of the present agitation is the extreme bitterness of spirit and violence of language against all classes, except the lowest, its crusade against wealth and its advocacy of infidelity, and its open adoption of the principles of socialism'.<sup>10</sup>

If the Potteries Examiner gently eschewed Chartist politics, it was certainly heavily influenced by Owenite socialism, and as such it continued an older Owenite tradition which in the Potteries extended back to 1833. The Webbs found the journal to be 'distinctly socialist after the Robert Owen plan,<sup>11</sup> although J.F.C.Harrison interprets the Owenism of the journal more as a

9. F.C.Mather, 'The Government and the Chartists', in A. Briggs (Ed.), Chartist Studies, (1959), p.385.

10. 'Report of the Commissioners to the Potteries', 1843, p.219.

11. Webb Trade Union MSS op.cit., folio 205.

continuity of the ideals, language and assumptions of Owenism rather than of specific measures and institutions. In the Potters' Examiner old Owenites were adapting their Owenism to the new problems of the 1840's. The working potters of North Staffordshire believed that the issue which Owen had taken up in 1817, namely unemployment and machinery, were still the most relevant, and of much more concern to them than were the Halls of Science or social missionaries. Thus Harrison: 'Owenism in the Potteries was entirely a working class movement ... its categories of thought were trade unionist,' consequently, though accepting the 'Owenite anti-capitalist analysis and Owenite ideals, there came a search for some practical way out, some institutional alternative'.<sup>12</sup> That alternative, as has been suggested, was the Joint Stock Emigration Society, and its champion in the Potteries was William Evans.

Born in Abergavenny in 1816, migrating to the Potteries via Worcester in 1823,<sup>13</sup> Evans was 'like his mentor Robert Owen, a fanatical Welsh enthusiast whose cause was technological unemployment'.<sup>14</sup> R. Boston thinks it possible that Evans may have had some connection with the Shaker Frederick William Evans and his labour leader brother George Henry Evans of Worcester, and produces evidence to suggest that Evans was familiar with G.H.Evans' History of the Origins and Progress of the Working Man's Party, published in New York in 1840.<sup>15</sup> William Evans grew up in the Potteries, and at the age of twenty, when he was within reach of his journeyman'ship as a gilder, he became deeply involved in the twenty-week long Great Strike of 1836.<sup>16</sup> In 1843 the pottery unions appointed him editor of their new journal at a salary of one guinea per week.<sup>17</sup>

12. J.F.C.Harrison, Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America, (1969) p.228.

13. R. Boston, 'William Evans and the Potters Emigration Society', (Unpub. research paper, Univ. of Keele, 1974), pp.3-4; Journal of Ceramic History, No. 3, 1970.

14. *ibid.*

15. *ibid.* p.4.

16. Journal of Ceramic History No. 3, 1970.

17. Potters' Examiner 1 November 1845.



The journal, written by and for local potters, backed by a privately owned printing establishment with a stock worth three hundred pounds, was at its most popular in the early years of 1844 and 1845, but was, by 1846, declining in circulation. Evans complained on 3 October 1846 that 'the Examiner is falling ... it does not now sell more than 1,500 per week',<sup>18</sup> Although this figure was not unusual for local newspapers of the period,<sup>19</sup> Evans was depressed by the paper's apparent decline, and at the same time he became increasingly preoccupied with the issue of emigration. He led a campaign through the Potters Joint Stock Emigration Society to purchase land in the U.S.A. for settlement by pottery workers displaced by technological change in the industry. The settlement was to be known as Pottersville.<sup>20</sup> In response to Evans' obsessions with emigration schemes at the cost of furthering the immediate interests of the local pottery unions, some disenchanted potters, including 'several members of the Executive',<sup>21</sup> of the United Branches of Operative Potters, launched a new potters' journal in February 1848. According to Evans, the Pottersville Examiner and Lunnants Advocate set out explicitly to 'smash and destroy the Potters' Examiner and attack its editor.'<sup>22</sup> Other members of the Central Executive of the Operative Potters United Branches, however, argued 'that this Board entirely discountenances and disclaims any participation in the publication called the Pottersville Examiner, believing the same to be inimical to the rights and interests of the working potters, and therefore injurious to us as a body of United Operatives'.<sup>23</sup> In the bitter internecine struggle which was waged within the potters trade unions over the issue of emigration, therefore, William Evans won the first round. In the following months of March and

18. *ibid.* 3 October 1846.

19. See p. 157 below.

20. R. Boston *op. cit.*, *passim*.

21. Webb Trade Union MSS *op. cit.*, folio 219.

22. *ibid.*

23. *ibid.*

April 1848 he succeeded in enlarging the emigration scheme into a 'national affair', and on 8 April 1848 announced that the 'Emigration Society is now open to all trades on condition that the land already obtained and the printing press and paper be reserved as the property of the Pottery shareholders'.<sup>24</sup> Criticism of Evans continued to mount, however. Some critics had asserted since January 1848 that Evans' emigration scheme was being sponsored by various shipping agents, from whom he earned commissions for each emigrant recruited.<sup>25</sup> These fears appeared to have been vindicated when in July 1848 Evans changed the title of the paper to the Potters' Examiner and Emigrant's Advocate<sup>26</sup> and then to the Emigrant's Advocate,<sup>27</sup> ceasing the printing of trade union reports, proceedings and news entirely. In the same month he moved away from the Potteries, established himself as an embarkation agent on the Liverpool docks, and from there continued to produce his emigrant's paper until February 1851.<sup>28</sup> The Pottery Trades unions finally dismissed Evans from the editorship at the time of the collapse of the Pottersville Emigration scheme in 1851. Pottery shareholders as a result lost all their investments in American land, which appears to have been promptly and simply appropriated by the emigrants. Some evidence suggests that Evans returned briefly to the Potteries, earning his living as a portrait painter,<sup>29</sup> before migrating back to Wales, where he remained until 1863.<sup>30</sup>

In 1856 or 1857, however, a new Potter's Journal was begun, conducted not by an individual editor but by a 'committee of potters'.<sup>31</sup> A half penny paper, subtitled 'the labourer is worthy of his hire',<sup>32</sup> the Potter's Journal expanded its circulation quickly on the crest of a 'very considerable revival of Trades Unionism in the Pottery Industry'.<sup>33</sup>

24. *ibid.*

25. *ibid.*

26. *ibid.* folio 230.

27. *ibid.* folio 207.

28. *ibid.*

29. *ibid.* folio 267.

30. R. Boston *op. cit.*, p.42.

31. Webb Trade Union MSS *op. cit.*, folio 267.

32. Potters' Journal 8 October 1859; Webb Trade Union MSS *op. cit.*, folio 235.

33. Webb Trade Union MSS *op. cit.*, folio 267.

Within two years it boasted a circulation figure of two thousand per week, the Flat and Hollow Ware Pressers being responsible for the selling of between one thousand seven hundred and fifty and one thousand eight hundred and fifty each week and the overmen and others about one hundred and fifty copies. Unlike the old Potters' Examiner and the new Journal was, according to the Webbs, in the period from October 1859 to November 1860

'not devoted to trade news only but discussed many other questions. It was a small tract sized paper - very strong on Temperance, and with a distinctly religious bias. Cooperation - distributive through stores - was also supported and encouraged. During the period over which these copies extended

'Amalgamation' appears to have been the most interesting and absorbing question discussed, there being an article or a letter on the subject almost every week. Politics also were not neglected, and the tone of the paper was strongly Radical with perhaps a touch of Chartism remaining in it'.<sup>34</sup>

For example, on 24 December 1859 it printed a 'very violent attack in favour of Parliamentary Reform',<sup>35</sup> and maintained a close connection with its contemporary labour paper, the Glasgow based 'Potters' Advocate and Record'.<sup>36</sup>

The Potter's Journal was, therefore, a more broadly based paper than the earlier trade journal, mixing politics and local news freely with trade union business. By providing a multitude of different services, therefore, it was generally acknowledged by the pottery unions that by December 1859 'The Potter had proved very useful to the trade'.<sup>37</sup>

34. Webb Trade Union MSS op. cit., folio 244.

35. ibid. folio 237.

36. ibid. folio 237.

37. ibid. folio 237; Potter's Journal 31 December 1859.

The paper's success continued, and in 1863 the Potter's Journal was enlarged and retitled the Potteries Examiner and Workman's Advocate. Surprisingly, the man appointed to the editorship was William Evans, recently returned from his sojourn in Wales. Almost immediately his reappearance as editor of the Potteries Examiner stimulated fierce attacks upon him for his part in the emigration fiasco of 1848 to 1851 which led to much recrimination and abuse. The Pottery Unions, however, and in particular the Central Executive Committee, maintained a firm control over the editorship.<sup>38</sup> Evidence of this control emerges clearly from the minutes of the Record Book of the Transactions of the Executive Committee of the Hollow Ware Pressers Union between 1864 and 1867. From June 19 1865 there are frequent resolutions to the effect 'that the Editor of the paper be requested not to insert ...'<sup>39</sup>, 'that the Answer given of Mr. Evans' views with regard to the Leading Article of last week be referred to the lodges who have complained'<sup>40</sup>, and 'that no reports be published in the paper until passed by the various executives'<sup>41</sup>. In spite of the tight controls exercised over editorial policy in general, Evans remained highly unpopular as an editor. For the Hollow Ware Pressers that unpopularity hinged on two related complaints : firstly that Evans was lax in the advocacy of their trades and their unions, and secondly that under Evans' editorship the paper was rapidly losing money, and that there were some serious discrepancies in the paper's financial accounts. In July 1865, for example, the Hollow Ware Pressers complained that

'the interests of our paper had suffered through the conduct of Mr. Evans in presiding over a Tory Committee whilst the paper by its Prospectus was to

38. Webb Trade Union MSS op. cit., folio 270.

39. Record Book of the Transactions of Executive Committee for the Hollow Ware Pressers Union, Stoke Central Library, 26 June 1865.

40. *ibid.* 23 Oct. 1865.

41. *ibid.* 16 October 1865.

advocate Liberal Principles, and we hope that he will be more discreet in the future.' 42

In addition to Evans' unorthodox political sense, potters were also angered by the poverty of his journalism, his inability to express the wishes of the working potters of North Staffordshire. In September 1866 the Hollow Ware Pressers resolved 'that the Editor of the Examiner be requested to bend his attention more particularly to trade matters as are now occupying the trade at the present time'.<sup>43</sup> In the spring of the following year they reiterated that criticism, arguing 'that our Editor is lax in his efforts in forwarding our interests as a branch in the columns of the Examiner. We therefore feel it is our duty to take some steps to put pressure upon the Editor to induce him to exercise his talents on our behalf'.<sup>44</sup>

From the spring of 1867, however, criticism of Evans became even more angry and scathing. In April 1867 the Hollow Ware pressers objected to his editorials on the grounds that they were 'very unsatisfactory and injurious to the trade'.<sup>45</sup> Similarly in June of that year the board of the Hollow Ware Pressers Union recommended to the United Branches 'to prohibit for the future any letters appearing in our paper reflecting on any officers or calculated (to) injure our or any other society'.<sup>46</sup> In the following month the union again protested against Evans' editorial style, reminding the 'paper committee of the 'importance of not allowing our paper to be used against us, the proprietors of the paper', adding ominously that 'it cannot be expected that we should willingly support a paper that will villify and strive to injure us'.<sup>47</sup>

42. Record Book, Hollow Ware Pressers op.cit., 30 July 1865.

43. *ibid.* 17 September 1866.

44. *ibid.* 1 April 1867.

45. *ibid.* 29 April 1867.

46. *ibid.* 24 June 1867.

47. *ibid.* 8 July 1867.

As serious as Evans' evident lack of enthusiasm for the post were the financial discrepancies which appeared in the paper's accounts. By 1866, the Hollow Ware Pressers had assumed a disproportionate responsibility for the unenviable task of ensuring the paper's solvency. In December of that year, however, they protested to the United Branches that

'in justice to their members and themselves  
(this Board cannot) take any more responsibility  
in reference to their Examiner than any other branch,  
and also that it is the duty of the Proprietors to  
ascertain the loss the paper sustains every week  
and to lay levies on the branches to meet the same  
week by week'.<sup>48</sup>

Earlier in May 1866 the union had also made it known that

'it is the opinion of this Executive that some  
alteration ought to be made in the present  
conducting of the Examiner, also that the  
financial state of the Committee be ...  
enquired into and the salaries and commission  
paid'.<sup>49</sup>

At the end of the same meeting a resolution was carried to the effect

'that this Executive pass a vote of want of confidence  
in Mr. Evans as Editor of the Examiner'.<sup>50</sup>

Three times in October 1865, in May 1866 and in February 1867, the union called for enquiries, by a sub-committee of the United Branches, into the

48. *ibid.* 10 December 1866.

49. *ibid.* 21 May 1866.

50. *ibid.* 21 May 1866.

financial condition and affairs of the paper committee and the editorship.<sup>51</sup> Finally, in July 1867, the Hollow Ware Pressers demanded that the United Branches and the Paper Committee suspended any further payments to Evans towards the running of the Potteries Examiner.

'whilst we are wishful that the paper committee should meet all the just demands of the editor, we, having learned that there is an account against him, suggest that they withhold any further payments unto him until he has given a full bill of all his claims'.<sup>52</sup>

It is evident, however, that the constant complaints made against Evans by the Hollow Ware pressers were elements of a long term strategy to remove Evans from the editorship entirely, a war of attrition against the man whom they felt had betrayed them in 1848, and whose commitment to the paper and the pottery unions they regarded as one which remained ambiguous and uncertain. In May 1867 they passed a resolution to the effect that 'the question of editing our paper be taken before all the lodges in order to be prepared against our editor's notice expires (sic);<sup>53</sup> and continued the attack a fortnight later by seeking to 'recommend to the paper committee the propriety of calling together the executives of all the branches to deliberate on the best means of keeping our paper in to (sic) existence and also the question of appointing another editor'.<sup>54</sup> They even went as far as to support factional disputes against Evans within the paper committee itself, thanking one 'Mr. Cash for suppressing the paragraph in our paper concerning the editor's wages and request our delegate to support him on the paper committee for so doing, if necessary'.<sup>55</sup>

51. 30 October 1865; 21 May 1866; 18 February 1867.

52. *ibid.* 8 July 1867

53. *ibid.* 13 May 1867.

54. *ibid.* 27 May 1867.

55. *ibid.* 17 June 1867.

Finally, in July or August 1867, the United Branches of the Operative Potters dismissed Evans from the editorship of the Potteries Examiner, the paper on which he had worked for over a decade and which had always been associated with his name. According to the Webbs, he subsequently left the Potteries 'a discredited man'.<sup>56</sup> William Evans died of Atheroma Apoplexy in North Staffordshire on 14 March 1887, aged seventy one.<sup>57</sup> In the search for a new editor for the Potteries Examiner the Hollow Ware Pressers nominated a Mr. Glass 'if he will abide by the prospectus',<sup>58</sup> but finally agreed to the appointment of William Owen to the post in the summer of 1867.

b) The Potteries Examiner 1867-1879.

William Owen was born in Barnsfield, Burslem on 6 December 1844,<sup>59</sup> nearly a year to the day after the paper which he was to edit had been established. His grandfather was said to have been a relative of Robert Owen, and to have been born in Newtown, Montgomeryshire.<sup>60</sup> After becoming a soldier, allegedly recruited in Newtown,<sup>61</sup> Owen's grandfather was drafted to Halifax, Nova Scotia, where, in 1814, his son John Owen was born.<sup>62</sup> Shortly after John's birth the family moved to the Potteries, where John Owen became a potter's printer and married Anne Collinson,<sup>63</sup> born Burslem 1812.<sup>64</sup> William Owen was the youngest of John and Anne Owen's seven children, and was apprenticed as a boy to the pottery trade as a turner at Mr. Pinder's factory at Burslem. Owen, however, who was 'principally self-educated',<sup>65</sup> learnt Pitman's shorthand as a youth, and thus was able to leave the pottery industry 'while still quite a young man',<sup>66</sup> and entered local journalism, where he quickly 'developed a clear, strong and

56. Webb Trade Union MSS op.cit., folio 270.

57. Death Certificate, William Evans, Stoke Central Library.

58. Record Book op.cit., 8 July 1867.

59. Staffordshire Sentinel 14 October 1912.

60. *ibid.*

61. *ibid.*

62. Enumerator's Returns 1861, R.G. 9, 1929.

63. *ibid.*; Staffordshire Sentinel 14 October 1912.

64. Enumerator's Returns 1861, R.G. 9, 1929.

65. Staffordshire Sentinel 14 October 1912.

66. *ibid.*



picturesque style of writing, showing much Biblical and other culture'.<sup>67</sup>

In the late 1860's, William Owen married Mary Elizabeth Cartledge, a Burslem born woman a year his junior, and settled with her at 119 Edward Street, Barnfield, Burslem.<sup>68</sup>

In the summer of 1867, at the age of twenty three, William Owen was offered, and accepted, the important and influential post of editor of the Potteries Examiner. The paper, then four paged and selling at one penny per copy, was published at the Examiner Office at 1 Marsh Street, Hanley, and printed for the proprietors by Thomas Bayley at Red Lion Square, Newcastle under Lyme.<sup>69</sup> At the time of the Owen take-over, the Potteries Examiner was still owned by the Executive Committee of the United Branches of Operative Potters despite the fact that the paper was acquiring some considerable recognition and support from other workers and trade unionists in North Staffordshire, notably the coal miners and the ironworkers. Indeed, by 1871, the Potteries Examiner was subtitled 'The Official Organ of Colliers, Ironworkers, Earthenware workers etc.'<sup>70</sup> In order to facilitate the growth of the paper's circulation and influence throughout North Staffordshire, Owen became convinced that it would be necessary to extend and to diversify the ownership of the paper to include other workers' organisations, and to establish the paper on a more sound financial basis. The idea of forming a broader structure of ownership was not new. The Hollow Ware Pressers in particular had considered with some enthusiasm the possibility of establishing a joint-stock company of trade unionists of many different occupations to run the paper, at the time of the revival of the Potteries Examiner in 1864.<sup>71</sup> But the process of restructuring the paper's financial organisation and of

67. *ibid.*

68. Enumerator's Returns 1871, R.G. 10. 2852.

69. Potteries Examiner 17 March 1871. (No. 348., this is the first of the available series of the Potteries Examiner).

70. *ibid.*

71. Record Book of the Transactions of Executive Committee for the Hollow Ware Pressers Union op.cit., 15 August 1864.

extricating it from the control of pottery workers alone did not culminate until the summer of 1871, when the United Branches of the pottery unions finally agreed to help establish an independent co-operative printing company.

The Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society (Ltd.) was registered as an Industrial and Provident Friendly Society on 23 November 1871, at Owen's new Offices at 58 Hope Street Hanley.<sup>72</sup> Its rules were signed by members of an ad hoc committee which included Henry Pope, Smith, John Leyland, William Owen, Thomas Wagstaff, William Yeomans, James Hay and the secretary Edwin Jackson.<sup>73</sup> The 'Active Business Operations' of the new Co-operative Printing Company commenced in March 1871. On 24 March, Owen appealed for working class support for the new enterprise, trusting 'that not only the trade societies in their collective capacities, but every individual member and friend of working men will make special efforts to give the company a good start.'<sup>74</sup> In early April, Owen began a series of editorial articles emphasising this point, adding that 'the experiment we are making is being eagerly watched...'.<sup>75</sup> A conference of the various supporting unions and other interested parties decided in the first week of April 'not to commence the enterprise until they have the money to pay for all the material they require, and so in preference to commencing the newspaper and the general printing with insufficient means they have decided to begin the general printing and let the newspaper wait a short time longer'.<sup>76</sup> Owen also reiterated the urgency of the task of building the printing company.

'The (Potteries) Examiner is established and has an excellent circulation .... Its success as an advocate of the rights of labour in this district makes it now

72. Rules of the Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society Ltd., FS3/29/1426, p.1.

73. *ibid.* p.13.

74. Potteries Examiner 24 March 1871.

75. *ibid.* 7 April 1871.

76. *ibid.* 7 April 1871.

a necessity, for so long as true unionism exists here the working men will have a journal to promote the interests of labour .... The Examiner (however) can never progress beyond what it is, or become firmly established unless on the basis that is now proposed, viz, the workmen owning their own printing company'.<sup>77</sup>

Increased support for the paper from amongst coal miners and ironworkers in North Staffordshire finally ensured that the Co-operative Printing Company could begin to print the newspaper itself from early June 1871. This fulfilled 'the ambition of the present conductor of the journal, (which) ever since he commenced his duties, four years ago, has been to start a co-operative printing company whereby to print the Potteries Examiner ...'.<sup>78</sup> The Proprietorship of the paper was ultimately transferred from the old Financial Committee of the United Branches of the Operative Potters to the Co-operative Printing Company 'which consists of the same trade societies, though they hold the paper on a different basis to the old proprietary'.<sup>79</sup> in early June 1871.

The broadening of the ownership of the Potteries Examiner to include shareholders from occupations other than the earthenware industry marked also a significant change in the paper's style, an intensification of a process of transforming the paper into a popular working class newspaper which had begun with the Potter's Journal in the late 1850's.<sup>80</sup> In June 1871, William Owen explained that

77. Potteries Examiner 7 April 1871.

78. *ibid.* 2 June 1871.

79. *ibid.* 2 June 1871.

80. see page 34 above.

'one acknowledged defect of the Examiner has been its want of a full account of the local events, and as a strenuous effort will be made to remedy that in the new issue, it is hoped, and confidently expected, that a more general support will be accorded to the journal both in and out of the circle of trade unionism in the district'.<sup>81</sup>

The new issue, enlarged from four pages to eight and selling at a penny halfpenny, appeared on 10 June 1871.<sup>82</sup> As a result of these alterations in the paper's ownership, management and style, the circulation of the Potteries Examiner rose from two thousand two hundred per week in March 1871 to five thousand per week in February 1872 and to six thousand six hundred and fifty per week in September 1872.<sup>83</sup> These figures, given by the publishers, appear reasonable compared to the known circulations of other local newspapers in the area, although it is difficult to judge the accuracy of Owen's claim that the Potteries Examiner was being 'read by at least 20,000 persons',<sup>84</sup>

Thus, by September 1872, Owen was satisfied that the 'Examiner has ... become a journal of great importance to the class to which it belongs, and whose cause it advocates'.<sup>85</sup> The next step was to broaden the readership of the paper to include workers from the whole of industrial Staffordshire. In effect, this entailed extending the paper to the industrial belt of the Black Country. In May 1872, Owen distributed a circular to the principal trade unions of South Staffordshire calling for a conference to be held at Darlaston for the purpose 'of laying t<sup>e</sup> question of the paper being made a county working class paper'.<sup>86</sup> The circular included the following passage,

81. Potteries Examiner 2 June 1872.

82. *ibid.* 10 June 1871.

83. *ibid.* 24 February 1872,; 23 September 1872.

84. *ibid.* 24 February 1872.

85. *ibid.* 23 September 1872.

86. *ibid.* 25 May 1872.

'Though thirty or forty miles of rural district intervene between the two great industrial centres of our county, we do not think any excuse is necessary for our addressing you thus familiarly, as an identity of interest and a unity of object, viz., the improvement of our condition and the laying the foundation of our classes future and permanent elevation, should make our hearts as fresh towards each other as the long stretches of green fields that separate us; and we are sure that our special object in addressing you will need no excuse, but when thoroughly considered will commend itself favourably to every earnest-minded operative in all the varied industries of your district.

Working men have been talking for generations about their classes rights and wrongs, and have raved of its future progress, but have chiefly failed, because, while they have looked fondly towards the end, they have with criminal carelessness neglected the proper means which principally, we might say totally, lie in their not cultivating a manly self-reliant thought, and consequent independent and energetic action. They have toiled long and wearily, and generation after generation have sunk into the grave, but from their dead lives no new era, scarcely a step higher, has resulted; like machinery they have been worked and worn out; first to satisfy their merely bodily cravings, to be fed, clothed and housed; and second, to create riches for others who have moved them as they have pleased on the chessboard of life. Every man that wishes to 'get on' in life hurries

as fast as possible to leave our class, because in it there is very little to tempt him to remain; but what we really want is a desire to get on created in the mind of every individual working man, and that desire welded into one great resolve to work it out until success rewards the worthy effort. We desire not a few lifted up, but the so called 'dregs of society' raised by fully improving their present neglected advantages, and by demanding many now withheld. A mere denunciation of other classes will avail very little. The worst enemies of working men dread nothing so much as calm, persevering self-help. Those who rail, and rail, and rail again, waste all they have, their breath; but those who look 'quite through the deeds' of society, and seeing its rottenness, determine to speak and act are the men who 'win the better day' for themselves and their class.

We introduce the purpose of this appeal thus, in order to rightly prepare your minds for its earnest consideration. Working class combinations are springing up, or are already flourishing, in all parts of our county, and the battle of labour has been frequently fought both in North and South Staffordshire. To assist in making these struggles successful, to create a silver cord of sympathy between the members of the various organisations to form a medium of intercourse so that the trades may be informed of one another's doings and objects, to call forth latent working class thought and to shape vague ideas; to find a means for the expression of that thought, so that it may have its due influence upon the minds of other working men; to present the arguments of working men upon all the varied subjects

in which they are interested before the general public; in short to be a schoolmaster to our class in whose teaching confidence can be placed, a working class journal is required, belonging to and carried on, by, and for, the working men. Out of all the newspapers of this country that mould the public opinion, where are those that belong to working men, or that utter their thoughts? Many falsely pretend to speak in their name, and others have done good service at times; but what is wanted is for the working men to learn to speak for themselves, and to have in a journal of their own, a vehicle for their thoughts. Little we know of each others' grievances, of each others' opinions and aspirations, and still less do other classes know, because the industrial classes have been like dumb sheep before their shearers, or they have made the voice of their complaints heard fitfully and weakly and not constantly and powerfully. The time is come when the cause of working men should find fitting language, and that will not be found in all respects until they have learned to speak for themselves as men. And what matters if the written expression be sometimes rude and unpolished, like the rough yet homely dialects in which they discourse to each other, the truth of their thoughts will be a gem that will shine all the brighter for its rough setting.

In trades unions we have the physical force of working class unity; but a more subtle bond of fellowship, a combination of mind, is required, and then when one generation passes away it will not be as hitherto, our successors will not begin the work over again, but will commence just where their fathers left off. We do not

desire always to be learning the alphabet of our classes' uprisings and so we must learn that the force of mere numbers is only a brute power, unless it is controlled and directed by a constantly growing mind of its own, whose chief sources of power are in itself. We think we have said enough to show that one of the means to the end which working men should have in view, viz., their social and industrial regeneration, is the establishment of newspapers of their own, which will form a ready and efficient means of inter-communication and self education. The bird may wish to fly, but it has to wait until its wings are grown. One of the feathers in our own class's pinions is the means of articulating the thoughts that, in their full heart, crowd for utterance.

Many men live and die without discovering the great power that has been hidden within them; and so our class needs something to teach it to go down, deep into its own consciousness before it realizes the mightiness for good that lies wrapped up like the oak in the tiny acorn. Expressed mind creates thought in others. We shall never know what we are ourselves as men, much less teach others to respect us as we deserve, until we fling away the timorous, indolence, the ignorance and disposition to lean on others of the past, and decide like men to make the changes we think are justly required in modern society, by becoming constructive reformers, building up our own institutions, and then, just in proportion as we advance righteously, will the wrongs or disadvantages that we have suffered from melt away. Let us not



weakly cry like the frogs, to Jupiter for a King, but let us be rulers of ourselves, framers of our class's future, 'masters and lords of our heritage of labour'; and one great step in this direction will assuredly be the establishment of a Co-operative Labour Press'.<sup>87</sup>

The passage has been quoted at length because it is, in effect, Owen's manifesto. It analyses what he regards to be the problems, and suggests remedies for them; it defines the object of his enterprise, explains why he feels the object to be important, and delineates the means of achieving it. In the outline of his analysis of his contemporary society, and of the role of the working class within it, he touches upon a well-rehearsed philosophy of labour, one which is acutely class-conscious, though only ambivalently socialist, and one which insists upon introducing an intellectual element into working class industrial struggles. Furthermore, in the passage he places a strong emphasis on his awareness of his own individual role, and of the role of his newspaper, in the making of a genuine local tradition of working class industrial, political and cultural activity. Finally, Owen stresses the essential unanimity of purpose of workers of different occupations and from different parts of the country, particularly those in the county of Staffordshire in spite of their physical and geographical separation.

In June 1872 the South Staffordshire Trades at their conference in Darlaston considered Owen's document, and following some discussion resolved to approve in principle the idea of levying their members for the purpose of maintaining the Potteries Examiner. In addition, they promised to lend their support to the efforts which were being made to extend the circulation of the paper into South Staffordshire and the Black Country generally.<sup>88</sup>

87. Potteries Examiner 25 May 1872.

88. *ibid.* 15 June, 1872.

By this time, however, Owen was eager to extend his journalistic activity and influence to other industrial areas of the country. In 1871, in an editorial outline of his proposals for a co-operative working class newspaper system, he had argued that

' what is required for the working men of this country is a Times for their class - a daily newspaper representing the great industrial orders. And affiliated to that great central organ there should be local weekly newspapers in every centre of industry, and then there would be a network of labour newspapers that would be able to form the opinions of the workmen, and lead them to a higher individual, social and political life. It ought to cause a thrill of pride in the hearts of the workmen of North Stafford, that they have so far anticipated such a comprehensive system of working class journalism as to have founded in their midst their own local paper'.<sup>89</sup>

Owen, however, recognised that the danger implicit in attempting to circulate the Potteries Examiner in the form in which it took in 1872 as a 'workingmen's Times' in other industrial areas was that the paper would, by definition, lose its essentially local character, the single most important factor in its success up to that point. Ironically, therefore, the very success of the Potteries Examiner since 1871 led Owen and his associates to consider the feasibility of abandoning the old potters' journal in favour of a new departure and the creation of wholly new working class newspapers. Because, rather than in spite of its success in other

89. Potteries Examiner 2 June 1871.

industrial areas, principally in South Staffordshire, the Potteries Examiner would therefore revert to its former role of being the local paper of the North Staffordshire trades, whilst a new working class Times, albeit in weekly form, spawning many local editions, would be launched to satisfy the requirements of workers in other areas throughout the country. In this way, Owen thought, the ideal of the local labour paper as exemplified by the Potteries Examiner could be perpetuated successfully in other areas.

In June 1873, only a year since the Potteries Examiner had successfully begun to extend its circulation into South Staffordshire, Owen, accompanied by William Brown, North Staffordshire miners' agent and member of the Council of the Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society, began an extensive tour of the coalfields of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Shropshire, the Forest of Dean and South Wales. For two months they argued the case for a national and independent working class newspaper system at lectures, public meetings, trade union delegate meetings and miners' demonstrations. In direct consequence of this agitational tour, nine new working class newspapers were begun under the auspices of Owen's 'Labour Press Newspaper System' within the following two years.

#### The Labour Press, Miners' and Workmen's Examiner.

Established in August 1873, the paper was edited and published by William Owen at Hanley, and printed there by the Staffordshire Cooperative Newspaper and General Printing Society. Intended initially for circulation in the coalfields of Staffordshire, East Worcestershire, Shropshire and Warwickshire, Owen envisaged that it would eventually be 'for general circulation in every industrial district of the United Kingdom'.<sup>90</sup> By 1874 he claimed that 'this edition of the LABOUR PRESS circulates in nearly every centre of industry except where the under mentioned local journals are published'.<sup>91</sup> The Labour Press Miners' and Workmen's Examiner started as a

90. Forest of Dean Examiner 9 January 1874.

91. C. Mitchell and Co., op.cit., 1874, p. 176.

four paged penny paper, but was enlarged\* in April 1874 to an eight paged paper selling at a penny halfpenny.<sup>92</sup>

The Shropshire Examiner.

Also established in August 1873, the Shropshire Examiner was published and printed by John Randall of Madeley, Shropshire until December 1874. Randall was born at Ladywood, Broseley, on 1 September 1810,<sup>93</sup> son of George Randall,<sup>94</sup> a mechanic by trade and a Quaker by conviction.<sup>95</sup> Educated at 'private schools' in Broseley,<sup>96</sup> Randall was in 1828 apprenticed to his uncle's pottery works in Madeley. Following two years as a porcelain painter at the Royal Rockingham works in Yorkshire and a further period with his uncle at Davenports' works in the Potteries, Randall returned to Shropshire in 1833 to join the Coalport firm of potters, with whom he was employed until 1881. During this period he became known as 'one of the most celebrated china painters of his day'.<sup>97</sup> A keen geologist, Randall was elected Fellow of the Royal Geological Society soon after Professor Ramsay had read his study of the geological structures surrounding the town of Bridgnorth. In 1851 he received a bronze medal for his stall of minerals and fossils displayed at the Great Exhibition in London.<sup>98</sup> In 1867 Randall was sent by the Society of Arts to the Parish Exhibition, from where he reported at length on pottery and iron manufactures to the Times. Delane remarked of Randall that he 'must rank among the class of artist workmen',<sup>99</sup> and the Canon of York Minster, the Hon. Rev. O.W.W. Forester corresponded to the Times to 'testify that he is a bona fide working man and one of those men who by

92. Labour Press, Miners' and Workmen's Examiner 11 April 1874.

93. Shropshire R.O. 987/34.

94. C.H.Mate, Shropshire. Life Sketches and Portraits of the Chief Administrators and Leading Residents of the County, (1907), p.174.

95. Shropshire R.O. 967/34.

96. C.H.Mate, op.cit., p.174.

97. J.Randall, History of Madeley, (Madeley 1880, repr.1972) introduction by B.Trinder, p. i.

98. J.Randall correspondence, 1 June 1883, Local Studies Library, Shrewsbury CO4/1161/27.

99. Times 13 September 1867.

diligent use of all opportunities of improvement during his leisure hours ... has educated himself.<sup>100</sup> By 1870, Randall, in addition to porcelain painting, was also classified by a local directory as a 'bookseller, stationer and news agent and journalist, and agent to the Medical and General Insurance Co. and to the Briton Life'.<sup>101</sup> In 1872 he established a printing office in a room of his house at Commercial Buildings, Madeley.<sup>102</sup> From this establishment Randall printed books written by himself, including Handbook to the Severn Valley Railway. Illustrative and Descriptive of Places along the Line from Worcester to Shrewsbury, (1863), Old Sports and Sportsmen, (1873), Captain Webb, the Intrepid Champion Channel Swimmer, a comprehensive account from materials supplied by his friends, Randall's Tourists' guide to Wenlock, Tourists' Guide to Bridgnorth, and Warfield and its Townships, (1875), The Clay Industries including the Fictile and Ceramic Arts on the Banks of the Severn : with notices of the Early Use of Shropshire Clays, the History of Pottery, Porcelain etc. in the District, (1877), Our Coal and Iron Industries, and the Men who have Wrought in Connection with them, (1879), an agitational pamphlet arguing for Health before Wealth, Shall we have a Local Board, (1879),<sup>103</sup> Devils, Inns, Ghosts and other Apparitions, (1882)<sup>104</sup>, The Old Court House, Madeley. Its History, Traditions and Associations from 1,020 to the Present Time, (1883?), The Tom Moody Almanack and All Round the Wrekin Advertiser, (1884),<sup>105</sup> and Villages and Village Churches in the County of Salop<sup>106</sup> and A Short but Comprehensive Sketch of the Lives and Usefulness of the Rev. John W. and Mary Fletcher, with Interesting Statistics Shewing the Religious Aspects of Madeley Then and Now, The Increase of Population and the Growth of Religious and Educational Means and Appliances, both undated.<sup>107</sup> Randall

100. Times 22 September 1867.

101. E.R.Kelly, Post Office Directory of Shropshire, (1870), p.87.

102. Shropshire R.O. 987/34.

103. *ibid.* 1438/9.

104. *ibid.* 1438/11.

105. *ibid.* 1438/13.

106. *ibid.* 1438/4.

107. Consult his articles etc, Shropshire County Library, Shrewsbury Branch, Watton Collection, Vol.1, pp. 280, seq.

also printed and published works written by other local authors; for example, G. Griffiths' Reminiscences and Records during Twenty Years Residence in the Midland Counties from 1869 to 1880 was published by Randall at his High Street Office in Madeley in 1880. Randall was also editor, publisher and printer of the Salopian and West Midland Monthly Illustrated Journal, a sixpenny monthly review of science, literature and politics which utilized new processes to print illustrations with copper plate and wood engravings, photographs and autotypes,<sup>108</sup> from March 1875 until February 1879, and of a penny weekly local newspaper, The Wrekin Echo, from July 1879 to August 1881. Randall eventually sold the copyright of his newspaper to the Shropshire Guardian, a new Liberal county paper.<sup>109</sup>

John Randall was, by the early 1870's, a local author and scientist of some repute, with strong links with the Pottery trades of North Staffordshire and with the radical wing of the Liberal Party. In 1874, whilst publisher of the Shropshire Examiner, he was elected a councillor of the Borough of Wenlock.<sup>110</sup> According to B. Trinder, 'Randall was an archetype of the Victorian self-made man. Of humble origins, he had succeeded in his own trade, had educated himself, had built up his own business, had travelled to further his education, and had participated fully in local community life'. He was 'essentially ... a Victorian Liberal, an optimist who believed that times were getting better as a result of the spread of democratic principles'.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, Randall had been radically inclined ever since his early involvement in the Anti Corn Law League, and shortly before his death on 16 November 1910<sup>112</sup> he confessed that 'although most of my friends have gone over to the Unionist cause, I have stuck to my old love - Free Trade.'<sup>113</sup> Under his guidance the

108. The Salopian March 1875.

109. Wrekin Echo 20 August 1881; Shropshire R.O. 987/34.

110. J. Randall, History of Madeley, op.cit., p.iii.

111. *ibid.*

112. Shrewsbury Chronicle 25 November 1910.

113. Shropshire R.O. 987/34.

Shropshire Examiner reportedly had 'a large guaranteed weekly circulation in the mining and ironworking centres of South Shropshire and the adjacent districts; it has also a growing circulation in Shrewsbury and throughout the County'.<sup>114</sup> The Shropshire Examiner was the only local edition of the Labour Press Newspaper System not to have been printed by the Staffordshire Co-operative and General Printing Society at Hanley. In December 1874, however, Owen assumed full control over the publication and the printing of the new paper, issuing it from Wellington until February 1875, and henceforth from his new offices at Market Street, Wolverhampton.<sup>115</sup>

The Derbyshire and Leicestershire Examiner.

This paper also commenced immediately following Owen's visit to the Derbyshire coalfields, in August 1873. Initially edited and published by Owen at Hanley and printed by the Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society, the paper was published by R.J. Frankland of Swadlincote, Burton, from April 1874 to May 1875. According to Owen, the Derbyshire and Leicestershire Examiner was being 'widely circulated in the extensive mining districts of the ... two counties, it being largely purchased by all classes of the community'.<sup>116</sup> The paper was priced at one and a half pence per weekly copy.

Forest of Dean Examiner.

Established in August 1873 the Forest of Dean Examiner was published by George Long, printer, stationer and bookbinder at the High Street, Cinderford<sup>117</sup> until April 1874 when Owen issued it personally from Blakeney. The paper was printed by the Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society at Hanley. Priced at one and a half pence this weekly paper was said to have 'a very extensive guaranteed circulation among the general public, and the miners of the towns and villages

114. C. Mitchell and Co., Newspaper Press Directory, 1874, p. 176.

115. Miner and Workmen's Examiner 26 December 1874, 13 February 1875.

116. C. Mitchell op.cit. 1874, p.176.

117. Morris and Co., Commercial Directory and Gazetteer of Gloucestershire with Bristol and Monmouth, (Nottingham 1876), p.469.

in the neighbourhood of the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire'.<sup>118</sup> The paper was to 'be a record of the movements of working men nationally, particularly of the various districts of the A.A.M.'. <sup>119</sup> Moreover, in the pattern of the other editions, it would also strive to be a good local paper, a 'circulating "Speech House" of the Forest of Dean...'.<sup>120</sup> The first issue explained that

'The miners of this locality have long wished for a paper of their own, and during the last few months the question has been discussed at their delegate and other meetings, and the result of their deliberations is the appearance of this paper today'.<sup>121</sup>

Cannock Chase Examiner.

Benjamin Evans of Hednesford began to publish this edition of the Labour Press in August 1873, and continued to do so until December 1875 with the exception of the period between February and April 1875 when Charles Smith of Hednesford temporarily assumed control of its publication. This penny weekly circulated 'in the towns and villages in the new mining districts in the middle of Staffordshire, which promises to become one of the most thickly populated and prosperous mining districts in the whole county'.<sup>122</sup>

Tamworth Miners' Examiner and Workmen's Journal.

Principally a local miners' paper, this penny weekly was printed by the Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing society, and published by Owen at Hanley from its inception in September 1873 until March 1874. Henceforth, until October 1875, the paper was published in Tamworth by J.P. Elliott. Elliott was, according to H.J. Hodson, editor of

118. C. Mitchell op.cit. 1874, p.176.

119. Forest of Dean Examiner 2 August 1873.

120. *ibid.* 2 August 1873.

121. *ibid.*

122. C. Mitchell op.cit. 1874, p.176.



the Coventry based labour newspaper the Miners' Weekly News, 'the deservedly respected working man's advocate in Tamworth'.<sup>123</sup> Having left school 'at the early age of eight years to follow the plough tail',<sup>124</sup> Elliott had, by 1870, established a small wholesale and retail business in hosiery, haberdashery, jewellery, toys, fancy goods and 'so forth' at George Street, Tamworth.<sup>125</sup> In 1873, Elliott was President of the Tamworth Branch of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union.<sup>126</sup> He also took a keen interest in the affairs of local coal miners, was a friend of William Brown, and frequently occupied the chair at local miners' meetings: in May 1874, for example, he chaired one such meeting of six hundred striking colliers at Polesworth, and in December 1873 chaired a meeting held to support William Brown's candidature as a Working Men's Representative for Tamworth.<sup>127</sup> Elliott was in 1873 also local agent of the Miners' Weekly News and the Labourers' Union Chronicle. His involvement with the working class press of the early 1870's earned him a radical reputation locally, and invited severe reproaches from the local middle class press.<sup>128</sup>

Having securely established these six editions of the Labour Press Newspaper System, Owen approached the leadership of the A.A.M. directly in order to guarantee their official approval of his scheme. In September 1873 he attended a meeting of the Executive Committee of the union and put forward his 'plan ... for providing the working men of the country, particularly the Association of Miners, with a system journal, published from one centre, and providing for labour a press of its own'.<sup>129</sup> The Executive found that the 'scheme was of a comprehensive and practical character'.<sup>130</sup> Owen sought for the Labour Press and Miners and Workmens Examiner the formal support of the A.A.M. nationally, and was eager that it

123. Miners' Weekly News 6 September 1873.

124. *ibid.* 6 September 1873.

125. J.G. Harrod and Co., Postal and Commercial Directory of Staffordshire, (1870), p. 1024.

126. Miners' Weekly News 30 August 1873.

127. *ibid.* 27 December 1873; Shropshire Examiner 9 May 1874.

128. for example see Tamworth Herald 6 September 1873.

129. Derbyshire and Leicestershire Examiner 27 September 1873.

130. *ibid.*

become 'the recognised organ of the Amalgamation'.<sup>131</sup> After some discussion on the matter, the Executive unanimously passed the following resolution:

'That this Executive Committee recommends Conference to hear the plan of Mr. William Owen, editor of the Potteries Examiner, the Forest of Dean Examiner, the Shropshire Examiner, the Tamworth Examiner and the Miners' and Workmen's Examiner &c., on the question of establishing a newspaper for circulating information among the members of this Association seeing that the project will not require any monetary consideration'.<sup>132</sup>

Owen thus obtained the permission of the A.A.M.'s Executive Committee to address their Bristol Conference on Tuesday 14 October 1873 'upon the necessity of establishing a working class newspaper for the amalgamation, which would be the embodiment of the views and aspirations of working miners'.<sup>133</sup> He referred to the critical absence of such an organ during the South Wales coal miners' strike in 1871 and 1873, 'and while remarking that on that occasion almost all the papers in the country were opposed to the interests of the men, he paid a compliment to the Western Mail as being the only journal which had taken an impartial and consistent course throughout the struggle'.<sup>134</sup> Owen explained that he had already approached the Executive Committee of the A.A.M. on the matter, 'but as they had as much business as they could well get through, without taking upon themselves the responsibility of a working class newspaper, it was resolved that Mr. Owen should attend the conference, and submit his scheme for their approval'.<sup>135</sup> He was received 'with loud applause'.<sup>136</sup> by the Conference, and proceeded to

131. .ibid.

132. .ibid

133. Potteries Examiner 18 October 1873.

134. Western Mail 15 October 1873.

135. Potteries Examiner 18 October 1873.

136. .ibid. 18 October 1873.

give the delegates details 'of his plans for the establishment of labour journals, for miners and other trades'.<sup>137</sup> William Brown also spoke in favour of Owen's scheme. Eventually, Henry Mitchard and Mr. Heycock proposed and seconded the following resolution, which was adopted unanimously by the Conference.<sup>138</sup>

' This conference is of the opinion that it is desirable and necessary for the association to have an organ through which the executive may communicate to the various districts, but finding that it is impracticable for the association to take the responsibility of establishing and taking such a paper that we determine to adopt the system of labour newspapers now published under the name of the Examiner, as a medium of intercourse and general organ of the association; and urges the districts to make arrangements - if not already done - for the extensive circulation of the Examiner by recommending trustworthy persons as agents; further, that this conference instructs the Executive to open up negotiations with the paper for the insertion of any advertisements necessary relative to meetings and general business of the association.'<sup>139</sup>

Following this positive gesture of support from the A.A.M., Owen proceeded to publish three further editions of his, by then well-established, Examiner series.

#### South Staffordshire Examiner.

A penny weekly paper published at Wednesbury by Owen, and

137. *ibid.* 18 October 1873.

138. Western Mail 15 October 1873.

139. Potteries Examiner 18 October 1873.

printed by the Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society from December 1873 until its discontinuation in November 1874.

It was said to circulate 'through the vast industrial district from which it takes its name, comprising a population of upwards of half a million',<sup>140</sup> although its brief lifespan suggests strongly that very few copies of this paper actually reached those industrial workers. Owen's optimism was at its peak in 1873, however, and in January 1874 he published the following notice.

'Mr. Owen is willing to make arrangements with the Trade Societies of any centre of industry to issue a local labour journal, in connection with the Labour Press Newspaper System, which has been originated with a view to the establishment of labour journals throughout the country, through which working men may advocate and defend their rights'.<sup>141</sup>

Owen ended the notice with a call to 'Workingmen' to 'support the papers of your class!'.<sup>142</sup>

#### West of England Examiner.

The most ephemeral of all the editions of the Examiner series, the West of England Examiner was printed by the Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society and published throughout its brief life by Thomas Thomas of Bristol. The paper was established in May 1874, and sold at a price of a penny halfpenny, but was terminated seven months later in December 1874, priced, for its final month, at one penny. Owen promised his readers that 'the West of England Examiner is purely and simply

140. C. Mitchell and Co., op.cit, 1874, p.176.

141. Forest of Dean Examiner 9 January 1874.

142. ibid. 9 January 1874.

a working man's paper; it has no half dealings with other classes, no subserviency to other ranks of society ...<sup>143</sup>.

Wednesbury, West Bromwich and Darlaston Examiner.

A weekly paper priced at one and a half pence printed by the Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society and published by Owen at Wednesbury between September 1874 and February 1875, henceforth by Owen from Market Street Wolverhampton. The last of the Examiner series to be issued. Owen also intended to produce a Lancashire Examiner and a South Wales Examiner, but neither were ever published.<sup>144</sup>

There are difficulties and dangers in adhering too closely to functional terms as they are supplied by the subjects of investigation to describe their own relationships to the management of Labour Press Newspapers. 'Publishers', 'managers', 'editors', and to a lesser extent even 'printers', either overlapped in meaning or else referred to different functions in different places at different times. The details of actual newspaper management, of the arrangement of authority, control and decision making at editorial, proprietorial and supporter levels, will be discussed below, but a brief word is necessary at this point to clarify the terminology of the above descriptions of the Examiner editions. Owen, at least until December 1875, was in sole editorial control of each of the local editions of the Examiner, and editorials written by him appeared in each edition simultaneously each week. Local 'publishers', such as J.Randall, R.J.Frankland, G. Long, J.P.Elliott or T.Thomas were in general responsible neither for editing nor, with the exception of Randall, for the printing of the papers. Their tasks were to collate local news, act as general local agents and make arrangements for effective distribution. The A.A.M. resolution of October 1873 suggests that these local 'publishers' were nominated by local A.A.M.districts.

143. West of England Examiner 30 May 1874.

144. Forest of Dean Examiner 7 November 1873, Potteries Examiner 5 July 1873.

The 'publishers', however, were all small shopkeepers, newsagents or printers of radical persuasion.<sup>145</sup>

The contents of the Examiner editions were closely related to each other. From August to December 1873 the Forest of Dean Examiner, then a four paged paper, consisted of a selection of news items, advertisements and editorial material from the eight paged Potteries Examiner. From December 1873 until February 1875 the Forest of Dean Examiner and the other local editions of the Examiner included selections from the Potteries Examiner plus two columns of local news, presumably collected and prepared and possibly printed by their respective local agents, and two pages of stereotyped foreign news which were syndicated throughout the Examiner group. Advertisements were also differently arranged in the various editions, and some papers, such as the Leicestershire and Derbyshire Examiner for example, were priced at 1½d instead of at 1d.

There was nothing particularly novel about this scheme. Partly, or 'split', printed papers had been in circulation since the 1850's.<sup>146</sup> In the mid 1860's sixteen Liberal newspapers in the West of England were all near-identical editions of the Dorset and County Express, although they all appeared under different titles. When the paper was purchased by a Conservative publisher in 1868, nine other editions were introduced.

However, there was one important exception to this pattern in the Examiner group of local editions, namely the Labour League Examiner. Printed initially by the Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society from February 1874, this organ of the Amalgamated Labour League was both published and edited by William Banks, the General Secretary of the League, and from 1875 by Banks and Edward Bradbury, the League's treasurer. Owen exercised no editorial control whatsoever over the paper.

145. cf. A.J.Lee, Origins, op.cit. p.65.

146. For example, the Town and Country Newspaper; see A.J.Lee, Origins op.cit., p.90.

c) The Wolverhampton Times and the subsequent development of the Labour Press Newspaper System in South Staffordshire 1874 to 1879.

Following the establishment of nine new local newspapers, many of which were circulating in or south of the Black Country of South Staffordshire and North Worcestershire, Owen decided to leave the editorship of the Potteries Examiner to take up a residence more central to the distribution area of the new Labour Press series. With the continuing early success of the Examiner editions, the reasons for Owen's move were clear. In the Forest of Dean, for example, readers complained of the 'late arrival of the Examiner, in the district, often as late as Saturday evening'. Timothy Mountjoy, a local colliers leader, however, reassured his members in February 1875 that 'he understood that after the present week, Mr. Owen would remove to Wolverhampton, and the difficulty then would, he had no doubt, be overcome'.

On leaving the Potteries, Owen was presented with a Testimonial by the organised workers of North Staffordshire for his work as a journalist, as secretary and founder of the Potteries Board of Arbitration and conciliation and as a member of the Burslem School Board.<sup>147</sup> In November 1874, Owen established the Wolverhampton Times and Bilston, Wilehall, Wednesfield and Sedgley Journal, ostensibly at his new offices in Market Street, Wolverhampton.<sup>148</sup> The paper was printed, however, by the Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society in Hanley.<sup>149</sup> It was not until February 1875 that the paper began to be printed privately at Owen's own printing presses in Wolverhampton,<sup>150</sup> and in that month he transferred the printing of the Miners' and Workmen's Examiner, the Shropshire Examiner, the Forest of Dean Examiner and the Wednesbury Examiner from Hanley to his own offices at 28 Market Street, Wolverhampton. The Derbyshire and Leicestershire Examiner duly followed

147. Forest of Dean Examiner 12 February, 1875, 13 March, 1875.

148. Wolverhampton Times 23 November 1874.

149. *ibid.* 2 January 1875.

150. *ibid.* 20 February 1875.

the others in May 1875. The Tamworth Miners' Examiner, however, continued to be published by Owen at Tamworth, and the Cannock Chase Examiner by Charles Smith until April 1875, henceforth by Owen and Benjamin Evans at Hednesford until December 1875. Local news-columns were discontinued from February 1875, whereupon the various editions became identical versions of the Miners' and Workmen's Examiner. Following the departure of the Examiner series from the Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society to Owen's private printing works in Wolverhampton, the Miners' and Workmen's Examiner was reduced from eight pages to four, and its price fell from a penny halfpenny to a penny,, ostensibly 'at the request of many of our agents and subscribers'.<sup>151</sup> In April 1875, however, the paper was returned to its original size but retained its cheaper price. In May its title was again changed to the Miner, priced at one penny halfpenny. The Miner was printed by Owen but published for a brief two week period by J.P. Elliott of George Street, Tamworth.<sup>152</sup> In June 1875 the paper was again retitled the Miner and Workmen's Examiner and its editor resigned the paper's function to being merely a Wolverhampton and Black County workers' paper whereas previously it had sought to circulate throughout the whole of the regions of the A.A.M.<sup>153</sup> In November 1875 the Wolverhampton Times also changed its title to the Wolverhampton and Midland Counties Advertiser.<sup>154</sup>

The Wolverhampton Times had originally been founded to 'create a demand for a cheap, popular, and independent local journal ... to represent and cultivate local thought upon all public matters'.<sup>155</sup> As such, it represented Owen's first venture into popular-Liberal local journalism, for unlike the Examiners the Wolverhampton Times recognised 'no distinction of

151. Miners' and Workmen's Examiner 19 December 1874, 20 February 1875; Shropshire Examiner 13 February 1875; Forest of Dean Examiner 12 February 1875; Hednesbury Examiner 20 February 1875; Derbyshire and Leicestershire Examiner 22 May 1875; Tamworth Miners' Examiner 13 February 1875, 30 October 1875; Cannock Chase Examiner 20 February 1875, 10 April 1875, 1 January 1876.

152. Miner 8 May 1875.

153. Miner and Workmen's Examiner 5 June 1875, 19 December 1874.

154. Wolverhampton and Midland Counties Advertiser 27 November 1875.

155. Wolverhampton Times 28 November 1874.



class, creed or party ... The Times will not be a class paper ...<sup>156.</sup>

This new orientation was intensified in December 1875 when Owen's newspapers entered 'a fresh stage of (their) history ... under a new, or rather an extended proprietary'.<sup>157</sup> In that month the Wolverhampton and Midlands Counties Advertiser, the Miner and Workman's Examiner, the Derbyshire and Leicestershire Examiner, the Forest of Dean Examiner, the Tamworth Miners' Examiner, the Wednesbury Examiner and the Cannock Chase Examiner each fell under the joint editorial control of Owen and his newly acquired partner, Alexander Jeffrey.<sup>158</sup> Owen and Jeffrey undertook to continue previous editorial policy, and to hasten the process of transforming their papers into local Liberal Party weeklies. They explained that from December 1875 the papers under their control, particularly the Wolverhampton and Midland Counties Advertiser, would

'appeal for support to no particular class of the community, but shall endeavour so to conduct the Times, that while received as a "welcome guest" into the cottage of the intelligent artisan, it may also be found on the office tables and in the drawing rooms of the wealthiest manufacturers of the district. Whilst advocating the amelioration of the condition of the industrial classes, we shall not support the claims of labour as against those of capital .... In short, no effort will be spared to render the paper a first class family journal'.<sup>159</sup>

As editorial policy moved further away from purely working class and trade unionist concerns, it moved closer to the concerns of the Liberal

156. *ibid* 28 November 1874.

157. Wolverhampton and Midlands Counties Advertiser 4 December 1875.

158. Miner and Workman's Examiner 11 December 1875; Shropshire Examiner December 1875; Derbyshire and Leicestershire Examiner 11 December 1875; Forest of Dean Examiner 10 December 1875.

159. Wolverhampton Times 4 December 1875.

Party, both national and local. Owen and Jeffrey were adamant that 'Liberal politics will be upheld' in their columns.<sup>160</sup> Following this restructuring of the proprietary and the consequent alteration of the political direction of editorial policy, the Tarworth Miners' Examiner was terminated in January 1876 and the Wednesbury Examiner precisely a year later.<sup>161</sup> At the time of the latter's dissolution, the proprietors reaffirmed their objective, which was to 'secure ... more general publications.'<sup>162</sup> In July 1877, Alexander Jeffrey left the proprietary, and for the following month the paper's owners were known simply as Owen and Company.<sup>163</sup> In August of the same year a Mr. Spencer joined Owen as joint owner of the various newspapers,<sup>164</sup> and within two months the papers of the Examiner series, with the exception of the Miner and Workmen's Examiner had been discontinued. The proprietors explained the changes thus:

'We have since the commencement of this paper published several editions of it under the names of the Shropshire Examiner, Cannock Chase Examiner, Wednesbury Examiner etc. besides publishing the Wolverhampton Times.

We have now consolidated these journals into one, and they are now published under the general title of

The Midland Examiner and Wolverhampton Times ... we hope to make the Examiner and Times more acceptable as a Midland family newspaper'.<sup>165</sup>

The new paper superseded all Owen's previous Examiner local editions, but was published by Owen and Spencer from their various local

160. *ibid.* 4 December 1875.

161. Tarworth Miners' Examiner 15 January 1876; Wednesbury Examiner 6 January 1877.

162. Midland Examiner and Times 10 January 1877. p.38.

163. Miner and Workmen's Examiner 6 July 1877; Shropshire Examiner 6 July 1877; Derbyshire and Leicestershire Examiner 6 July 1877. Forest of Dean Examiner 6 July 1877; Cannock Chase Examiner 3 August 1877; Wolverhampton Times 7 July 1877.

164. Wolverhampton Times 10 August 1877 (*ibid.* above).

165. Midland Examiner and Wolverhampton Times 13 October 1877.

offices - at Market Street, Wolverhampton, 5 Union Street Wednesbury, Market Square Oakengates, Post Office Hednesford. Furthermore, in December 1877 Owen and Spencer began to issue from Market Street Wolverhampton and King Street Dudley a new Liberal daily paper, the Daily Midland Echo. A four paged halfpenny paper, the Daily Midland Echo continued to be published by Owen and Spencer until October 1878; henceforth it was owned by Owen and Company until its final issue appeared on 15 January 1879. Since 1 January 1879 it had appeared as a weekly paper. The stated aim of the Daily Midland Echo was 'to help all that tends to knit together the varied parts of Liberalism',<sup>166</sup> and it was claimed to be 'The Recognised Organ of the Liberal Party' in Wolverhampton.<sup>167</sup> In October 1877 the Miners' and Workmen's Examiner was retitled The Miner - Organ of Underground Labour, and appeared as a penny eight paged tabloid whose objects were to 'reflect the movements of the class everywhere, and try to give the pitch, rather than the leaves of mining movements'.<sup>168</sup> By March 1878 the Miner had diminished to four pages, and in October 1878 was discontinued.<sup>169</sup> In the same month the Midland Examiner and Wolverhampton Times was retitled the Midland Examiner and Times and was continued under Owen and Company's control. as an enlarged seventy two column penny paper until its final edition appeared on 27 September 1879.<sup>170</sup>

d) The Potteries Examiner and the Staffordshire Knot 1874 to 1892.

Whilst Owen was still experimenting with the early editions of the Labour Press series of newspapers in 1874, the Potteries Examiner was continuing to enjoy a relatively high level of popularity throughout North Staffordshire and parts of South Staffordshire and Shropshire. According to Owen, the Potteries Examiner, selling at a penny halfpenny (or

166. Daily Midland Echo 11 December 1877.

167. Midland Examiner and Wolverhampton Times 16 March 1878.

168. Miner 20 October 1877.

169. *ibid.* 2 March 1878, 24 October 1878.

170. Midland Examiner and Times 5 October 1878, 27 September 1879; F.W.Hackwood, The Wednesbury Papers, (Wednesbury 1884), p.90.

twopence if stamped) had in 1874 a weekly circulation of '8,000 copies in the Potteries, and throughout North Staffordshire and adjacent districts comprising the populous towns and villages of Alsager's Bank, Audley, Baddeley Green, Biddulph, Burslem, Bucknall, Brindley Ford, Cheadle, Cobridge, Chesterton, Fenton, Ford Green, Goldenhill, Hanley, Ipstones, Kidsgrove, Keele, Lichfield, Longton, Nowcop, Madeley. Hilton, Newcastle, New Chaple, Oakamoor, Rugeley, Silverdale, Stoke, Talk o' th' Hill, Tunstall'.<sup>171</sup>

The paper's publishers claimed that the Potteries Examiner had also a growing circulation in South Staffordshire' and in the mining districts of East Worcestershire, Shropshire and Warwickshire.<sup>172</sup>

With Owen's inauguration of the Wolverhampton Times in November 1874, however, the post of editor and manager of the Potteries Examiner became vacant. In January 1875, the paper's management advertised for 'an Editor for the Potteries Examiner, and to take the general management of the office'.<sup>173</sup> Respondents were requested to state their terms and their age, and to enclose 'testimonials as to (respondents) character and ability'.<sup>174</sup> The advertisement made explicit the fact, that reference would be 'given to one having an intimate acquaintance and sympathy with the movements of working men'.<sup>175</sup> Those interested in the post were asked to reply to Edwin Jackson, Secretary of the Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society since February 1874.<sup>176</sup> The successful candidate was the Reverend Thomas Davies Matthias.<sup>177</sup>

Matthias was born in Cardigan to English parents in 1823. The eldest son of Edward and Mary Matthias, both school teachers,<sup>178</sup> he

171. C.Mitchell and Co., op.cit. (1874), p.

172. *ibid.*

173. Potteries Examiner 23 January 1875.

174. *ibid.*

175. *ibid.*

176. *ibid.* 7 February 1874.

177. *ibid.* 13 February 1875.

178. Register of Baptisms in the Parish of St.Mary's, Cardigan, 31 March 1823, N.L.W.

nonetheless claimed in later life to have been 'brought up in an aristocratic family'.<sup>179</sup> Despite his Anglican and Tory<sup>180</sup> upbringing, however, Matthias received his early education from his mother, who, according to him, 'had lived at least a hundred years before her time',<sup>181</sup> and who often told him that her reading of history had brought her to the conclusion that 'working men would never know their power until they joined together' in trade unions.<sup>182</sup> Matthias recognised the irony of his history. Though born in Wales, 'he had been in spirit an American, and though brought up by a Tory family he had found himself a democrat'.<sup>183</sup> From an early age Matthias had spent much of his time in the company of workers, and was 'snubbed' by his childhood companions for 'demeaning himself',<sup>184</sup> by doing so. In later life he even claimed to have been involved in the Rebecca riots and to have 'followed the silent but active, secretive Cambrian ribband-men for many a mile in our boyhood'.<sup>185</sup> A precocious child - he had read Shakespeare by the age of eight - Matthias was educated at Cardigan Grammar School, where he soon began to develop a talent for preaching. At thirteen he was a convinced nonconformist, and preached his first sermon. Thereafter he joined the Wesleyan Connection, and preached on the Cardigan Wesleyan circuit until, at the age of twenty six, he was converted to the Baptist denomination at Blaenffos.<sup>186</sup> During his thirteen years as a Wesleyan Matthias mixed freely with Unitarians, and appears to have been impressed by their Christian brand of radicalism and their sympathy for the Chartist movement.<sup>187</sup>

179. Potteries Examiner 25 March 1876.

180. *ibid.* 12 August 1876.

181. *ibid.* 25 March 1876.

182. *ibid.*

183. *ibid.* 12 August 1876.

184. *ibid.* 23 April 1875.

185. *ibid.* 18 December 1875.

186. South Wales Daily News 23 November 1904.

187. Potteries Examiner 18 December 1875.

Following his conversion, Matthias was pastor of the Baptist Church at Narberth, where he is said to have baptised converts at the enthusiastic rate of one hundred a year.<sup>188</sup> Thereafter, until 1856, he took charge of two chapels, Bethlehem and Salem, near Scolton. In 1856, however, he left Wales for the pastorship of North Parade Chapel, Halifax.<sup>189</sup> Whilst here Matthias accepted the challenge of Charles Bradlaugh to a five night public debate on the 'Credibility and Morality of the Four Gospels'. The debate ended 'somewhat in the nature of a draw',<sup>190</sup> and in his autobiography, Bradlaugh remembered Matthias as having been 'unquestionably very sincere'.<sup>191</sup> In 1859 Matthias was also an active member of the West Riding Reform League.<sup>192</sup>

A firm advocate of temperance, Matthias eventually left Halifax to devote himself to the life of an itinerant temperance preacher. Returning to the ministry in Honeyborough, near Milford, in 1863 or 1864, Matthias then began his six years as pastor of Bethel, Merthyr Tydfil, in 1869. It was in Merthyr in the heady days of the labour unrest of the early 1870's that Matthias first became seriously engaged in working class politics. At a meeting of miners held shortly before the commencement of the coal strike of January 1873, Matthias is reported to have delivered an inflammatory speech attacking those opposed to taking industrial action, and arguing that 'a strike would not be a great evil, but a grand thing, and it would demonstrate the power of the working class'.<sup>193</sup> The speech, reported in a number of newspapers, including the Potteries Examiner, aroused immediate controversy, and Matthias hurriedly attempted to moderate his position in letters to the Western Mail

188. South Wales Daily News 23 November 1904.

189. *ibid.*; Halifax Courier 5 November 1859, Halifax Guardian 5 November 1859.

190. South Wales Daily News 23 November 1904.

191. C. Bradlaugh, Autobiography of C. Bradlaugh, A Page of His Life, (1873), p.12.

192. Potteries Examiner 13 February 1875.

193. *ibid.* 4 January 1873.

and the Beehive. To the former he appealed 'in the interests of fair play, honesty and justice, a small space in your valuable journal in self vindication against what I deem a cruel wrong'.<sup>194</sup> In his explanation, he denied the more inflammatory aspects of his speech:

'The Merthyr newspapers report me as saying that a strike was a grand thing, and charge me likewise with inflaming the minds of my audience last Thursday so as to influence them to a strike, whereas<sup>in</sup> the same report of my short address I am correctly stated to have said that I was not for a strike .... I never said that a strike was a grand thing, but I have said, and I still say, that in the event of a strike the men will deport themselves lawfully, and in a Christianlike manner'.<sup>195</sup>

In conclusion, however, he added 'whatever alternative may take place, I shall render the workingmen all the aid in my humble power'.<sup>196</sup>

The incident, for the purposes of this study, is a significant one, for as a result of this speech, Matthias came to the notice, in all probability for the first time, of the editor of the Potteries Examiner. Owen's first impression of Matthias was, moreover, not a favourable one. In an editorial comment which appeared in the Potteries Examiner the following week, Owen argued that

'Mr. Matthias, the Baptist minister, who spoke so intemperately at the last meeting last week, has been trying to justify himself by a letter to the local papers, but he fails dismally. No man can foment a dispute of so

194. Western Mail 7 January 1873.

195. *ibid.*

196. *ibid.*

curious a character as this, and then draw out of the consequences'.<sup>197</sup>

Matthias, however, was undeterred. In a letter to the Beehive in March 1873 he returned to the fray.

'My name may be partially known to you in connection with the great strike in South Wales. I have been charged with the crime of being its instigator and initiator. Those who have spoken and written this of me pay my humble abilities too high a compliment. I plead guilty, however, to the charge of heartily sympathising with the men on strike, and of rendering them all the little aid in my power to help them to fight this glorious battle to a triumphant issue'.<sup>198</sup>

In an important sense, Owen was wrong: Matthias did not attempt to 'draw out of the consequences' of his position, or positions, on the strike. Being a minister in Merthyr, drawing out of the battle could prove rather difficult. Richard Fothergill, Merthyr's Liberal M.P., for example, accused Matthias of 'poisoning the minds'<sup>199</sup> of the young colliers in his congregation, and further attacks upon him from the town's newspapers assured Matthias a secure place in the demonology of Merthyr's middle class. Furthermore, in early February 1873, Matthias was elected on to the Strike Aid Committee along with three of the most prominent trade unionists of the A.A.M. in South Wales, Thomas Halliday, Henry Thomas, miner s' agent for Aberdare and Isaac Connick, miner s' agent for Merthyr.<sup>200</sup> This appointment

197. Potteries Examiner 11 January 1873.

198. Beehive 15 March 1873.

199. Potteries Examiner 22 February 1873.

200. ibid. 3 February 1873.



brought Matthias into direct contact with trade unionists and radicals in the Forest of Dean and Birmingham, and finally with William Owen himself.

In Birmingham he addressed a meeting of the Trades Council, and succeeded in securing their support for a public meeting which he intended to hold in the city 'for the purpose of putting the men's side of the question fairly before the public...which he feared had not been done'.<sup>201</sup> A few days later he addressed a meeting in Hanley with Owen and William Brown, having addressed similar gatherings in Wednesbury, Bromwich, Tunstall, Longton and Wolverhampton during his journey north from Birmingham.<sup>202</sup> In Hanley he explained to Owen and others that 'he was not a working man, nor had he ever been one; but he simply advocated the rights of the working men of the United Kingdom. He was early converted to that principle - converted to it by working men.... Although he did not belong to them,...he had come through conscientious scruples'.<sup>203</sup> Partially as a result of his efforts on their behalf on the Strike Aid Committee during the coal strike of 1873, the Forest of Dean miners awarded Matthias an honorarium, and Timothy Mountjoy considered and advocated the adoption of Matthias as a prospective Working Men's Candidate at the forthcoming election in the event of George Howell's absence from the contest.<sup>204</sup>

By mid-1873, therefore, Matthias was firmly identified with the labour movement in Merthyr and elsewhere. In 1873, he also published a revised edition of a lengthy poem which had been originally published as a pamphlet in 1855, titled A Book for the Times, The Pleasures of Faith, and subtitled 'A Popular Poem wherein the Claims of Labour, the Rights of the Working Man, and the cause of truth and freedom generally, are fully

201. Birmingham Trades Council, Minutes of Special Meeting, 19 February 1873, p. 152. Local Studies Coll, Birmingham Public Library.

202. Potteries Examiner 22 February 1873.

203. *ibid.*

204. Workman's Advocate 15 November 1873.

delineated, and carefully advocated'.<sup>205</sup> In this sixty-one paged poem he reflected upon his own Christian faith and his political radicalism, and introduced an appreciation of the work of contemporary trade union leaders, men, whom, by this time, he had come to know personally.

'Work on intrepid Heroes - fear no frown -  
Macdonald, Pickard, Halliday and Brown;  
Lloyd Jones the gifted, both with tongue and pen,  
And many more who toil with heart and brain,  
To snap the fetters and unclasp the gyves,  
Which cramp industry, and destroy men's lives'.<sup>206</sup>

In 1873 he was also active in establishing and promoting new trade unions among unskilled general labourers in Merthyr and Dowlais.<sup>207</sup>

As a mark of his growing popularity with the workers of Merthyr, Matthias was elected to the Merthyr School Board at an election held in March 1874. He had stood unambiguously as a 'Workingmen's Candidate', and by so doing had removed from office Mrs. Crawshay, wife of one of Merthyr's most powerful ironmasters. The town's press was outraged. The Merthyr Telegraph protested that 'The Rev. T.D. Matthias, Baptist Minister, - knows nothing of the question at issue ... in no sense - intellectually - are his qualifications equal to the duties of the important office to which he has been elected, and it will require much firmness to prevent his becoming an obstacle in the progress of business'.<sup>208</sup> A fortnight later the same paper predicted that

'from this gentleman the ratepapers are scarcely aware what they may expect. If they are certain upon any point

205. T.D. Matthias, The Pleasures of Faith, (London and Haverford West, 1855); T.D. Matthias, A Book for the Times, The Pleasures of Faith, (London and Cardiff 1873), title page.

206. T.D. Matthias, op.cit. (1873), p.56.

207. Workman's Advocate 14 Feb. 1874.

208. Merthyr Telegraph 6 March 1874.

it is that he will be crotchety, troublesome and self-willed. Beyond this all is doubt .... The rejection of Mrs. Crawshay is to be regretted, but the way in which her defeat was secured, is to be more than regretted - it is to be condemned'.<sup>209</sup>

Within a very short period of time, however, Matthias was appointed to serve on the Educational and School Management subcommittee of the Merthyr School Board.<sup>210</sup> However, tragedy struck the Matthias family in April 1874, a month after his election to the Merthyr School Board. His wife, Mary Ann Matthias, died suddenly a matter of days after giving birth to their fifth child at their home in Thomas Street, Merthyr.<sup>211</sup>

It was with this curious background behind him that the middle aged Reverend T.D. Matthias applied for and was offered the editorship of the Potteries Examiner. In Burslem during the week preceding 13 February 1875, Matthias was introduced at a meeting addressed also by Henry Broadhurst, Lloyd Jones and other trade union leaders and local activists, as the 'newly appointed editor of the Potteries Examiner'.<sup>212</sup> Curiously, Matthias did not attend the meeting at which his celebrated predecessor, William Owen, received his testimonial from the labour organisations of North Staffordshire upon his departure from the Potteries. Matthias, by way of explanation, revealed that 'the note of invitation did not reach the office until' the testimonial meeting had been held.<sup>213</sup>

Matthias was editor and manager of the Potteries Examiner for the following three and a half years, during which there were no serious disputes between the paper's management and the newspaper's staff of printers.

209. *ibid.* 20 March 1874.

210. *ibid.* 3 April 1874.

211. Arddiffynnydd y Gweithiwr 14 April 1874.

212. Potteries Examiner 13 February 1875.

213. *ibid.* 6 March 1875.

and composers. Matthias, moreover, succeeded in maintaining the Potteries Examiner's reputation as a 'working class journal' in a distinctive agitational style of his own. In May 1878, however, Matthias wrote to the Earl of Lichfield, Arbitrator to the Potteries Board of Arbitration and Conciliation, of which Matthias had been secretary since the spring of 1875, informing him that

'My official duties as the Secretary for the operative section of the Board are over as I have resigned owing to the ceasing of the Paper I have managed for above three years to be a Labour Organ. It has been sold and its affairs are in liquidation so that I am out of employment at present and looking out for a fresh engagement .... Pardon my presumption in thus so freely addressing your Lordship. I have no prospect at present of a place to suit me. My little Family as I look upon them give me anxiety but he who caters for the sparrow and feedeth the Ravens will open a door of hope and usefulness yet for me to serve him by serving humanity in some other phase of life'.<sup>214</sup>

Immediately following Matthias's resignation the subtitle of the Potteries Examiner was changed from 'A Journal of Local Intelligence, devoted to the interests of Labour. The Official Organ of the Potters, Miners, Ironworkers etc.', to 'A Weekly Journal of Liberal Politics, Literature, Labour News and Local and General Intelligence'.<sup>215</sup> The new paper was printed privately by the new proprietors Edmund Taylor, Philip Barker and George Taylor Platt at the Examiner Printing Works, 58, Hope Street, Hanley, on the same premises as the old Co-operative printing press. G.T.Platt had

214. T.D.Matthias to Earl of Lichfield, 24 May 1878, Staffordshire R.O. D615/P(L)/6/7

215. Potteries Examiner 20 April 1878, 27 April 1878.

previously been a secretary to the Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society between November 1873 and February 1874<sup>216</sup>, and had subsequently been sub-editor of the Potteries Examiner under Matthias and a teacher of shorthand.<sup>217</sup> Soon after the establishment of the Examiner Printing Works, the Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society was formally dissolved, on 21 September 1878.<sup>218</sup>

By October 1878 Ahmed Kenealy, son of Dr. Edward Vaughan Kenealy, counsel to the Tichbourne defendant, was on the reporting staff of the Potteries Examiner, much to the chagrin of other members of the staff who feared that his personality 'was damaging the character of the paper', and that consequently, 'there was a probability of the paper becoming a Conservative Organ'.<sup>219</sup> A. Kenealy had been manager and printer of the Staffordshire News, a four paged halfpenny paper which had appeared briefly from Clough Street Hanley from 25 June 1877. In November 1878, however, the Potteries Examiner continued to be published by Platt, its sole proprietor<sup>220</sup> from Miles Bank, by Stafford Street, Hanley. The paper was still being printed, however, by Barker at his Steam Printing Works at 58 Hope Street Hanley.<sup>221</sup> In July 1879 the subtitle was removed entirely.<sup>222</sup> Platt continued to be the paper's proprietor until 3 January 1880.

In the late autumn of 1879, however William Owen returned permanently from Wolverhampton to settle in the Potteries. In the first week of January 1880 he again took the editor's chair at the Potteries Examiner's offices, but soon realised that the paper was a spent force. The final issue of the Potteries Examiner thus appeared under Owen's editorship on 5 June 1880. It is clear that Owen had not intended this to be so, for in this issue he promised his readers, in order to revive the paper's flagging circulation,

216. *ibid.* 22 November, 7 February 1874.

217. *ibid.* 23 December 1876, 29 January 1876.

218. Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society (Ltd.), Instrument of Dissolution, P.R.O. F38/29/1426.

219. Provincial Typographical Association, Minutes of Executive Council, 7 October 1878, p.273, University of Warwick Modern Records Centre MSS 39A/TA/1/8.

220. Potteries Examiner 16 November 1878.

221. *ibid.* 23 November 1878.

222. *ibid.* 12 July, 1879.

18.  
'A Splendid Picture of the Liberal Cabinet in next week's Potteries Examiner,'<sup>223</sup>

In the event this inducement to the party faithful was not sufficient to rescue the paper from dissolution.

Faced with the decline of the old Potteries Examiner, Owen was not complacent. In January 1880 he re-issued 'The Archer: a Volume of Local and General Literature', being a collection of essays and articles on local history, including 'William Elton the Chartist: A Tale of the Pottery Riots', and Staffordshire songs and poems, a number of which had been written by Owen in the late 1860's and very early 1870's.<sup>224</sup> The first edition of the Archer had been issued in January 1872, printed by the Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society.<sup>225</sup> Furthermore, shortly after the demise of the Potteries Examiner Owen began to edit and to publish Spice, 'The Potteries Comic Paper'.<sup>226</sup> Started by H.Nicholson in Hanley in October 1879 to 'shoot shafts of scorn at shame and expose public abuses',<sup>227</sup> this light hearted monthly penny 'journal of Pods, Pickles and Peppercorns'<sup>228</sup> had been taken over by Owen by September 1880,<sup>229</sup> possibly as early as 3 July 1880.<sup>230</sup> Spice, however, did not survive a charge of criminal libel brought against its editor and publisher by a prominent inhabitant of Hanley, Alderman G.P.Bradford J.P. The case did not go to jury, terms 'which did not transpire, being arranged'.<sup>231</sup>

In May 1881, Owen established a more substantial, and potentially more profitable and rewarding, newspaper based on the newly founded North Staffordshire Newspaper Company Ltd., at Town Hall Passage, Burslem and Hope Street Hanley. The new Company produced a daily and a weekly edition of the Burslem Mail, the Daily Burslem Mail being a four paged halfpenny paper which appealed 'for the support of all classes',<sup>232</sup> and the Weekly Burslem Mail, an eight paged penny paper which purportedly showed 'no sympathy

223. ibid. 5 June 1880.

224. ibid. 10 January 1880.

225. ibid. 1 January 1872.

226. ibid. 8 November 1879 (Advertisement for Spice).

227. Spice 1 October 1879.

228. ibid. 6 March 1880.

229. ibid. 1 September 1880.

230. ibid. 3 July 1880.

231. Staffordshire Sentinel 14 October 1912.

232. Daily Burslem Mail 28 May 1881.

to any denomination over another, but will endeavour to deserve the support of all classes'.<sup>233</sup> Both editions appeared for the first time during the third week of May 1881. The Burslem Daily Mail was the first daily local newspaper of its kind to be produced in the Burslem area. The paper was supported financially by Thomas Hulme and Joseph Dawson.<sup>234</sup> In December 1881, Owen again became involved in labour journalism, beginning a new paper initially in the form of a strike bulletin during the Potters' strike of that month. The Watchman, an eight paged halfpenny weekly was printed for the Joint Committee of the Potters' Federation and the Miners' Amalgamation by James Hutchings, Market Street, Hanley. The aim of the Watchman was to 'represent the labour interest in North Staffordshire'.<sup>235</sup> Owen explained that 'for nearly forty years the working men of this centre of industry have been - with intervals of a few years<sup>236</sup> - represented in the press by a journal of their own. The Watchman is issued by the organised potters, miners, and other classes of labourers to be their spokesman in all the public matters that affect them as workmen, but especially in relation to their trade interests as men who live by their labour'.<sup>237</sup>

Owen's reintroduction to labour politics in North Staffordshire particularly through the Watchman and his prominence in other respects in the leadership of the Potters' strike of 1881, led him to consider the possibility of establishing a labour newspaper in the district. Geographically less ambitious, but based on firmer financial foundations, it is almost certain that the Staffordshire Knot was Owen's most successful newspaper venture. The paper had been started by William Payne in 1880, and was acquired by Owen in 1882. Joseph Dawson, a supporter of the Burslem Mail of the previous year, and a prominent printer in Burslem,<sup>238</sup> was

233. Weekly Burslem Mail 28 May 1881.

234. Staffordshire Sentinel 14 October 1912.

235. The Watchman: A Journal of Industry 3 December 1881, Tupholme and Harvey Coll., Stoke City Library.

236. i.e. 1893-1895 and 1896/7-1898.

237. The Watchman: A Journal of Industry 3 December 1881.

238. Kelly's Directory of Birmingham, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire, 1898, p.649. (J.Dawson, of 8 Waterloo Rd., Burslem).

appointed sub-editor. The Staffordshire Knot was also backed by Absalom Wood, John Beardmore and Enoch Bennet, 'all respected and influential figures in and around Burslem'.<sup>239</sup> The eight paged weekly penny paper was edited by Owen at Percy Street, Hanley, and machined by Atkinson Bros., Market Square, Hanley.<sup>240</sup> The editor promised his readers that 'besides the potters, the miners, and the ironworkers, this paper would also represent the workmen of all classes in Staffordshire'.<sup>241</sup> In May 1885 a daily edition of the Staffordshire Knot was issued, printed published and edited by Owen. Owen was later joined by Ebenezer Goold, 'who had been educated for the Congregational ministry',<sup>242</sup> and a Mr. Coulson. The daily edition, which claimed to 'consistently advocate ... the progress and well being of the working classes',<sup>243</sup> was discontinued in March 1888. The weekly edition continued until December 1891, only a month after it had been formed into a limited liability company and retitled the Potteries Free Press and Staffordshire Knot.<sup>244</sup>

ii) John Thomas Morgan

a) Merthyr Chartist Periodicals 1840 - 1842.

Following the violent suppression of the Chartist demonstration in Newport on 3 November 1839, two Chartist journalists commenced the publication of a new Chartist newspaper. Udgorn Cymru (The Trumpet of Wales) first appeared in March 1840, a threepenny monthly journal, printed and published by David John, junior, and Morgan Williams in Glebeland, Merthyr Tydfil.<sup>245</sup> The latter was a Unitarian and a weaver by trade, whilst the

239. A. Rotheram and M. Steele, A History of Printing in North Staffordshire, (North Staffs. Poly. 1975), p. 114.

240. Staffordshire Knot 6 January 1883.

241. ibid. 13 May 1882.

242. Staffordshire Sentinel 14 October 1912.

243. Staffordshire Knot 4 May 1885.

244. Staffordshire Sentinel 14 October 1912.

245. D. Williams, 'Chartism in Wales', in A. Briggs (Ed.), Chartist Studies, (1959), p.242.



former represented Merthyr, Aberdare, Pontypridd, Newport and Pontypool at the Manchester Chartist Convention in July 1840, and was a prominent Welsh Chartist.<sup>246</sup> The Udgorn Cymru published reports and correspondence in both English and Welsh, although the latter predominated. Due to 'the demands of their English readers',<sup>247</sup> however, John and Williams began to issue an English language twopenny monthly version, The Advocate and Merthyr Free Press, in July 1840.

An early edition of Udgorn Cymru included 'instructions for the constitution and maintenance of the Chartist Society throughout the Kingdom'.<sup>248</sup> The Marquess of Bute, a close and concerned observer of the growth of Chartism in Glamorganshire, was of the opinion that

'This scheme is no doubt copied from an English

original which was probably in the Northern Star'.<sup>249</sup>

Bute believed, moreover, that most leading articles and the general content of both Merthyr papers were 'borrowed' from the Northern Star, and he blamed the growth of radical and Chartist journalism in the town on the activities of 'members of the Northern Star (who) came to Merthyr and with very bad effects'.<sup>250</sup> In December 1840 Bute informed L. Lewis, Secretary to the Board of Magistrates at Merthyr that he was 'anxious to know what is the case with respect to that Paper in Merthyr Tydfil (i.e. the Northern Star), also what is the circulation of the Udgorn Cymru and of the Advocate, and what is known as to the way in which those papers, or the circulation of them, is maintained'.<sup>251</sup>

In spite of their apparent plagiarism, Bute confessed that

'what has struck me as remarkable in this Publication

is, that there are two Chartist Newspapers published at

Merthyr at the same office, viz., by David John Jones

246. *ibid.* p. 242. M. Williams was also Editor of Y Gweithiwr (The Worker) in Merthyr in 1834.

247. *ibid.* p. 242.

248. Marquess of Bute to Marquess of Normanby, 26 September 1840, Bute Letter Book 13, Bute Coll., N.L.W., p. 384.

249. *ibid.*

250. Bute to L. Lewis, 15 December 1840, Bute Letter Book 13 *op.cit.* p. 459.

251. *ibid.*

and Morgan Williams : the Advocate in English, and the Udgorn Cymru principally in Welsh. The constitution of the Chartists and address of the Delegates is not printed in the Advocate but only in the Welsh Newspaper ...'.<sup>252</sup>

Similarly, on a different occasion, he affirmed his belief that 'Udgorn Cymru... is even worse than the Advocate'.<sup>253</sup>

Udgorn Cymru and the Advocate and Merthyr Free Press were sold at Chartist meetings and were generally 'hawked about for sale'.<sup>254</sup> in Merthyr and elsewhere in Glamorganshire, as were their supplements and pamphlets, including a Welsh language edition of Feargus O'Connor's addresses.<sup>255</sup> As radical unstamped newspapers, however, both Udgorn Cymru and the Advocate and Merthyr Free Press were vulnerable to legal attack, and soon after their appearance, and upon the insistence of powerful opponents of Chartism such as the Marquess of Bute, action was commenced to prosecute both papers under the Stamp Acts.<sup>256</sup> The Advocate and Merthyr Free Press was discontinued in April 1841, and the Udgorn Cymru survived only until October 1842.<sup>257</sup> With their disappearance, a radical working class press was not to re-emerge in Merthyr until the early 1870's.

#### b) The Merthyr Times 1871 to 1873.

The Merthyr Times first appeared on the streets of Merthyr on 31 March 1871. It is unclear who the proprietor, or indeed the editor, was. Its 'manager, printer and publisher', however, was John Thomas Morgan. Morgan was born in Monkton, Pembroke, in 1844.<sup>258</sup> Little is known of his early life, except that by 1871 he lived with his Devonshire born wife, Anne Vanstone, Esther M. and Ellen V. Morgan and Anne's fourteen year old

- 252. Bute to Normanby, 26 September 1840, Bute Letter Book 13 op.cit. p.385.
- 253. Bute to Bellingham, 8 October 1840, Bute Letter Book 13 op.cit. p.399.
- 254. Bute to Normanby, 26 September 1840, Bute Letter Book 13 op.cit. p.385.
- 255. Bute to Captain Howells, 10 October 1840, Bute Letter Book 13 op.cit. p.40.
- 256. Bute to Normanby, 5 October 1840, Bute Letter Book 13, op.cit. p.392.
- 257. D.Williams op.cit. p.242; for copies of Udgorn Cymru and the Advocate and Merthyr Free Press see copies sent to the Home Office by Bute, P.R.O. HO 42/15, HO 45/54.
- 258. Census of England and Wales, enumerator's Returns, RG/10/5395.

sister, Kate Vanstone, at 19 Glebeland Street, Merthyr. A printer by occupation, Morgan in 1871 employed one man at his printing office, which was situated in the house in which Morgan and his family lived.<sup>259</sup>

Glebeland Street at this time was Merthyr's 'Fleet Street'. In Number 20 lived William Bell, printer also employing one man; in numbers 21 and 22, Joseph Williams, printer and publisher of Tyst a'r Dydd, employing two men and one boy; and in number 24 Glebeland Street, Thomas Thomas, printer, employing one man.<sup>260</sup>

In its opening address the function of the Merthyr Times was defined as being

'increasing the influence of the cheap press, and of giving to the working classes of Merthyr and Dowlais what they have so long stood in need of - an organ of their own. Politically, the Merthyr Times will be strictly Liberal ... the cause of freedom - religious, political and social - will command its ready sympathy and undeviating support'.<sup>261</sup>

An eight paged penny weekly newspaper of distinctively radical persuasion, the Merthyr Times cleaved easily into two distinct parts. The first three pages - of advertisements, notes on 'passing events' and political news - was clearly communicated by telegraph from London. The fourth and fifth pages, however, were noticeably different in character and content, their print being larger and often more untidily laid than the previous pages, and were concerned almost wholly with local reports and commentary.

Increasingly towards the close of 1872, these centre pages, in which the editorial hand is felt to be heaviest assume more radical overtones. The Merthyr Republican Club, established in January 1872, is defended and its

259. *ibid.*

260. *ibid.*

261. Merthyr Times 31 March 1871.

principles expounded,<sup>262</sup> as are other progressive, Liberal and trade unionist causes. The final two pages revert to that of the first section, with neatly composited pages of articles on events in 'Literature and Art', a comprehensive guide to London and county corn markets and advertisements, predominantly of the wares of local shops and chemists.

A radical core, therefore, was encased in competent local journalism. Yet, throughout 1872 it is apparent that the paper's editor was attempting to define more specifically the range of its readership, in view of the current turbulence of labour unrest throughout South Wales.

The very scale of working class activity, and the lack of a local-regional paper to report its course sympathetically, encouraged the proprietor of the Merthyr Times to supplement the weekly paper with another, mid-week paper, the Western Observer, from July 1872. First advertised in the Merthyr Times on 8 June 1872, its task was to 'supply the want of a mid-week Liberal Newspaper, which had been long felt in this important and populous district'.<sup>263</sup> This halfpenny weekly survived, according to one source, until 1874.<sup>264</sup>

b) The Workman's Advocate 1873 to 1875.

The Merthyr Times, however, was discontinued in May 1873. It seems that the growing tide of labour unrest in South Wales convinced Morgan of the necessity of adopting a more direct approach to trade unionism in general as well as to the question of language in Wales. The circumstances of the unrest clearly demanded a bilingual working class newspaper. The precise origins of Morgan's new paper are unclear, as is William Owen's role, direct or indirect, in its creation. Owen visited South Wales in July 1873 as an extension of his tour with William Brown to Shropshire, Warwickshire and the

262. *ibid.* 13 January 1872.

263. *ibid.* 8 June 1872.

264. C. Mitchell and Co., *op. cit.*, 1874, p.

Forest of Dean of the same month.<sup>265</sup> Whilst in Merthyr Owen addressed a delegate meeting supposedly representing 'thirty to forty thousand miners and ironworkers',<sup>266</sup> on the necessity of establishing a Welsh working class newspaper. The suggestion received a favourable response from the delegates, and resolutions were passed supporting the idea of launching a new labour journal in South Wales. A number of delegates were recruited by Owen to begin the task of producing such a journal, for which the titles 'Working Man's Paper', 'The Union Flag of South Wales and Monmouthshire'<sup>267</sup> and the 'South Wales Examiner' were suggested.<sup>268</sup>

In September 1873, only a month after the establishment of the Labour Press, Miners' and Workmen's Examiner, the Shropshire Examiner, the Derbyshire and Leicestershire Examiner, the Forest of Dean Examiner and the Cannock Chase Examiner, Morgan started a working class journal independent of Owen's Labour Press Newspaper System. The Workman's Advocate, a penny weekly paper published in Merthyr by its editor, printer and manager, J.T.Morgan, purported from its first issue to be the 'official organ of the colliers, miners, and ironworkers, etc.'<sup>269</sup> Compare this subtitle to that of the Potteries Examiner, which also claimed to be the 'official organ of the Potters, Miners, Ironworkers etc.' in the period between March 1871 and April 1878. Furthermore, Morgan also attempted to combine the general advocacy of trade unionist and other working class causes with coverage of local and county news. Morgan outlined his intentions in his opening address to his readers. It has been quoted at some length since it locates Morgan's thinking whilst at the threshold of his new venture.

265. Potteries Examiner 5 July 1873.

266. *ibid.*

267. *ibid.*

268. *ibid.*

269. Workman's Advocate 6 September 1873.

'A new thing - long wished for - long, very long indeed - and likewise long talked about as highly necessary, and unspeakably indispensable is now in this our weekly Journal launched forth on the 'Mere Magnum' of public opinion. This, our literary and long-desired for adventure, the 'Workman's Advocate' will be devoted fully, heartily and exclusively to the true interests and honest claims of the working classes of all sections and branches in the Community, but chiefly to those handicrafts and industries, which principally prevail and take the foremost lead in South Wales and Monmouthshire, viz., the cutting of coal, mining operations and the manufacture of iron.

With regard to our sentiments, we, as the name of our paper indicates are bent on promoting the claims of Labour, the prerogative of industry and the paramount claims of the working man.

Our journal will be emphatically a Working men's organ. His friend, not his flatterer - a counsellor, and not a sycophant - in short a guide, guardian and instructor, and not a servile vassal, or a truckling adulatory time-server.<sup>270</sup>

The style is clearly more direct than that of the Merthyr Times of March 1871. Moreover, Morgan intended to produce a paper which would be not only sympathetic to workers in general but which sought to organise them into defensive organisations. The imminence of an organised employer's offensive following the successful coal miners' strikes of 1871 and 1873 gave this task a certain urgency.

'Now that there is a strong federal Union of Masters for South Wales - "An Employer's Association" - we think that the publication of our paper is highly opportune and imperatively necessary, and calls for the united and general support of every heir of labour from Newport to Carmarthen. We shall strenuously uphold and endeavour to strengthen and extend the principle of "union" and federation amongst all and every branch of trade, work, art and profession'.<sup>271</sup>

Morgan's commitment to bilingualism in the Workman's Advocate was unambiguously acknowledged in the penultimate paragraph of his 'Address'.

'Correspondence both Welsh as well as English will be fully and freely admitted in the 'Advocate', provided the writers abstain from personalities, abuse, and libellous language. We shall place our columns open both to the partisans of Capital as well as to the friends and adherents of labour, believing that in the interests of wealth and virtue, there is nothing that can be better calculated to elicit sound knowledge, information and substantial wisdom, than free debate and unfettered discussion'.<sup>272</sup>

In the paper's fourth issue, Morgan claimed that the circulation of the Workman's Advocate had increased beyond his expectations, and remarked that he was 'glad to see that our labours are being appreciated by the working classes'.<sup>273</sup> By December 1873, he anticipated a circulation of twenty thousand copies for the following winter.<sup>274</sup> Actual circulation

271. *ibid.* 6 September, 1873.

272. *ibid.*

273. *ibid.* 27 September 1873.

274. *ibid.* 27 December 1873.

figures are difficult to assess, but the projected figure appears to have been absurdly optimistic, particularly in view of the fact that the Beehive's circulation reached a peak of only eight thousand copies per issue during the agitation among the Staffordshire puddlers in 1865.<sup>275</sup> According to an advertisement in May's Press Guide for 1874, the Workman's Advocate was sold

'in every town and hamlet in Wales, and in many of the principal centres of industry in England, going to the chief centres of organisation amongst working men of all trades'.<sup>276</sup>

In September 1873, however, the Workman's Advocate could claim only twelve official agents, situated in Merthyr, Dowlais, Troedyrhiw, Mountain Ash, Aberdare, Hirwaun, Neath, Swansea, Cardiff and Llansamlet,<sup>277</sup> a figure which does not appear to have grown significantly over the following two years. By way of comparison, it is important to point out that the London based Miner and Workman's Advocate was in 1864 being sold by eleven agents at Tredegar, Rhymney, Abertillery, Brynmawr, Abersychan, Nantyglo, Ebbw Vale, Aberaman and Blaenavon.<sup>278</sup> Nevertheless, 'due to increasing circulation and influence in Wales, Monmouthshire, part of England and Scotland'<sup>279</sup>, Morgan 'contemplated the enlargement of the Workman's Advocate'<sup>280</sup> in April 1874, and in the course of the following month Morgan reported that his agents had sold out of copies of the Workman's Advocate 'before late orders ... due to an increase in circulation'.<sup>281</sup> Moreover, in January 1874,

275. S.Coltham, 'George Potter, the Junta and the Beehive', International Review of Social History Vol. 9, 1964, p. 409.

276. F. May, British and Irish Press Guide and Advertisers' Handbook and Dictionary, (1874), p.136.

277. Workman's Advocate 20 September 1873.

278. Miner and Workmen's Advocate 9 January 1864.

279. Workman's Advocate 25 April 1874.

280. *ibid.* 23 May 1874.

281. *ibid.* 23 May 1874.



Morgan reported that a London office of the Workman's Advocate had recently been opened at Hardcastle's, 2 Queen Street, Cheapside, E.C. 'where Advertisements are received, and a file of the paper is kept for our Metropolitan clients' reference'.<sup>282</sup> The paper was also being sold and read in the ironworking districts surrounding West Hartlepool, particularly by Welsh emigre ironworkers, as well as among colliers and ironworkers in North and South Staffordshire.<sup>283</sup>

From the summer of 1873, therefore, Morgan's eight paged tabloid-sized paper made a determined attempt to grasp the attention of organised workers in Wales and elsewhere, and was a sincere, if strained, attempt to balance in its pages the two languages of Wales. From the start, the Workman's Advocate consisted of two separate newspapers, and after the first, predominantly English, half dozen issues, the paper fell into a consistent pattern of devoting the first four pages to its English readers, and the final four to its Welsh readers. For a monoglot of either tongue it must have been a cumbersome newspaper. One 'Experienced Puddler' from North Staffordshire complained that articles in the Welsh language in the Workman's Advocate prevented him from 'taking so much interest in it as I should'.<sup>284</sup>

c) Amddiffydd y Gweithiwr 1874 to 1875.

Partially in response to pressure from both English and Welsh readers and correspondents, Morgan divided the two existing halves of the paper into two separate and distinct organs, an English language Workman's Advocate, and a Welsh language Amddiffydd y Gweithiwr. The latter appeared as an eight paged penny paper, whilst the former appeared in reduced form, with only four pages, until it was enlarged to eight pages on 15 January 1875. Earlier, before the papers were divided in August 1874, Morgan had claimed that the Welsh section of the Workman's Advocate had placed its

282. *ibid.* 3 June 1874.

283. *ibid.* 15 November 1873, 17 January 1874.

284. *ibid.* 17 January 1874.

'faith in the workers as a class',<sup>285</sup> and appealing for more Welsh readers, commented that 'Our circulation should be greater than that of every other paper in the Principality'.<sup>286</sup> A Welsh correspondent also explained that, as far as he was concerned, the 'object of the Workman's Advocate ... is to give ... workers an opportunity to express their grievances ... and to help them ... to win their rights'.<sup>287</sup> Following the separation of the two papers, Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr began to extend its circulation into North Wales, particularly to the slate working areas surrounding Blaenau Ffestiniog and the Penrhyn Quarries.<sup>288</sup> The Workman's Advocate, on the other hand, increasingly reported labour news from Bristol and the West of England, and when Owen's West of England Examiner was discontinued in December 1874, the Workman's Advocate promptly assumed the new subtitle of 'official organ of the trade unions in North and South Wales and the West of England'.<sup>289</sup>

d) Star of the West 1876.

In June 1875, Morgan alluded to the possibility of producing a new kind of newspaper with 'a large sized sheet and a staff of first class correspondents',<sup>290</sup> to supplant the Workman's Advocate and Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr. In July of the same year, following the repeal of the Labour Laws of 1871, the Workman's Advocate's subtitle was again changed from 'A Fair Field with no Favour' to 'An Independent Organ Advocating the Rights of Labour, Freedom from Class Legislation, Priestcraft and Tyranny'.<sup>291</sup> At the same time negotiations were being conducted with leaders of trade unions in South Wales and the West of England to launch a new

285. *ibid.* 20 December 1873.

286. *ibid.*

287. *ibid.* 4 October 1873.

288. *ibid.* 4 July 1874.

289. *ibid.* 1 January 1875.

290. *ibid.* 11 June 1875.

291. *ibid.* 23 July 1875.

labour paper, which was to incorporate the Workman's Advocate and involve the discontinuation of the Welsh language Amddiffynnydd y Gweithiwr.

Based on the same co-operative principles as the Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society of 1871, Morgan's Labour Press,

Industrial and Provident Society was registered on 15 September 1875.<sup>292</sup>

Backed by a powerful committee of trade unionists, the Society was organised to fund and finance Morgan's new venture, the Star of the West. The decision to issue this paper was finally announced in the Workman's Advocate and in Amddiffynnydd y Gweithiwr in October 1875.<sup>293</sup>

The first issue of Star of the West appeared on 15 January 1876. In his 'Introduction' to his readers, Morgan the editor, affirmed many of the principles and the objectives of the Workman's Advocate and Amddiffynnydd y Gweithiwr :

'we are now living in an age full of meaning, a time which affords opportunities for the elevation of the class which at present occupies the base of that social structure commonly called Society. We also see, from the course of recent events, that this section of the community sees the advantages and is beginning to grasp the benefits, afforded during the present age, and therefore it is highly necessary and desirable that this all important move, upwards and onward, should be encouraged. No better means to this end can be employed than the Press - the Press, devoted in spirit and precept to this great and glorious end .... It will advocate the right of the British Toiler to Free Land, Freedom from Priestcraft and the Tyranny of the Capitalist.'<sup>294</sup>

292. Rules of the Labour Press Industrial and Provident Society Ltd., 1875, P.R.O. F39/38/1934, p.1.

293. Workman's Advocate October 1875.

294. Star of the West 15 January 1876.

Nonetheless, if the Star of the West remained essentially a Working Men's Newspaper',<sup>295</sup> its intention was, like those of the later Examiners, to become a good family weekly paper 'which will be welcomed into the home of every honest working man in the West of England and South Wales'.<sup>296</sup> Lasting only six weeks, however, its final issue appeared on 19 February 1876.

e) The West Bromwich Free Press 1876.

The Midland Free Press : A Journal for West Bromwich, Wednesbury, Tinton, Great Bridge, Darlaston, Oldbury, Smethwick, Handsworth and Surrounding Districts first appeared on 25 September 1875. An eight paged halfpenny weekly paper, it was printed and published by the proprietors W. Payne and Company at Coppice Street, West Bromwich, and was 'also published by their appointed agents in surrounding towns'.<sup>297</sup> Payne, in his introductory address 'To Our Readers' explained that 'whilst allying with the Liberal Cause, the new journal will be most independent in its conduct'.<sup>298</sup> In early March 1876, the paper was purchased by the Free Press Company Limited, a registered newspaper company,<sup>299</sup> operating from Scotland Buildings, High Street, West Bromwich.<sup>300</sup> By November 1876, and possibly as early as 24 June 1876, the Free Press Company Limited had appointed J.T. Morgan as the paper's manager.<sup>301</sup> Morgan remained in West Bromwich as a journalist until at least 1880, living in Jesson Street and later at 26 Queen Street, West Bromwich.<sup>302</sup>

295. *ibid.*

296. *ibid.*

297. Midland Free Press 25 September 1875.

298. *ibid.* A W. Payne had also initiated the Radical Times in Birmingham in 1876 and the Staffordshire Knot in the Potteries in 1880.

299. West Bromwich Free Press Co. Ltd., P.R.O. BP/51/2178/10172.

300. Midland Free Press 25 September 1875.

301. *ibid.* 24 June 1876, 18 November 1876.

302. Kelly's Directory of Birmingham, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire, 1878, p. 555; *ibid.* 1880, p. 559.

By the time of the voluntary dissolution of the Free Press Company Limited in August 1873 the paper had fallen under the control of F.T.Jefferson.<sup>303</sup> In March 1886, five months following the official dissolution of the Free Press Company Limited, Jefferson began to edit and to publish the Labour Tribune from his offices in High Street, West Bromwich. The Labour Tribune sought to 'represent the whole of the mining and iron districts, and - its publication in the Midlands notwithstanding - to take our place as a national journal'.<sup>304</sup> Letters welcoming the first issue of the paper, which claimed to be the 'Organ of the Miners, Ironworkers, Nut and Bolt Forgers etc. of Great Britain', were received from J. Arch, T.Blake M.P., C.Bradlaugh M.P., T.Burt M.P., C.A.V. Conybeare M.P., W.Crawford M.P., E.A.Rymer and other local union and radical leaders.<sup>305</sup> R.Juggins, previously a strong supporter of the Potteries Examiner and the South Staffordshire Examiner, became the paper's Darlaston agent in May 1886,<sup>306</sup> and by March 1887, the Labour Tribune was also being published in London at 14 Fetter Lane, Fleet Street, by George Potter.<sup>307</sup> In May 1887, Philip Harries, previously a contributor to and investor in Morgan's Merthyr papers but by this time a Liberal Councillor in his native Hanley, wrote to Jefferson to inform him that he 'always read the Tribune with the greatest pleasure', and complained that 'the papers in North Staffordshire were no friends of the working man'.<sup>308</sup> The Labour Tribune continued purely as a trade unionist organ until 30 June 1894. In spite of the fact that its circulation grew rapidly to around fourteen thousand copies a week in 1887, Jefferson discovered that by the early 1890's it was being run at a loss of £10 each week.<sup>309</sup> Embittered and saddened by the experience of producing

303. F.T.Jefferson to Registrar of Joint Stock Co's West Bromwich Free Press Co.Ltd., 26 August 1873, P.R.O, BT31/2178/10172.

304. Labour Tribune 6 March 1886.

305. *ibid.*

306. *ibid.* 22 May 1886.

307. *ibid.* 26 March 1887.

308. *ibid.* 13 August 1887.

309. *ibid.* 30 June 1894.

a working class newspaper, Jefferson explained his reasons for discontinuing the paper in his final leader to his readers.

'After nine years' hard work and heavy expenditure we have reluctantly arrived at the conclusion that the publication of the miners' organ is a game not worth the candle. The labour question may be the question of the day, but to judge by the experience of the Tribune and all its predecessors in labour journalism, the labourer don't care a penny a week for it .... As the present outlook affords so little prospect that the paper will within a reasonable time become self-supporting it must necessarily join the ever increasing majority of defunct "labour" newspapers.... As a final exhortation to the philanthropist aforesaid, who may contemplate the running of a labour newspaper, we say, as Punch said to those about to marry - Don't!'.<sup>310</sup>

310. *ibid.* 30 June 1894.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### CONTENT, FORMAT AND STYLE

In this chapter the internal structures of the local labour newspapers edited by William Owen and J.T.Morgan between 1871 and 1878 will be outlined and discussed. The object of the exercise is, firstly, to ascertain whether there were any significant differences between the respective balance of content, the formats and the styles of the two newspaper groups, and secondly, to estimate the extent to which they bear comparison with the 'mainstream' local newspapers with which they were obliged to compete.

#### 1) Content

Describing a newspaper is a complicated affair. Events recorded weekly as news items need to be systematised and categorised into identifiable and measurable quantities. The results of such an exercise in content analysis are necessarily approximate and generalised, giving <sup>an</sup> outline of the shifting balance of content in any one newspaper over a period of time. Consequently, it is particularly important in this case to avoid making crude interpretations of editorial opinion derived or deduced from statistics concerning the structure of the paper's contents. There is no necessary connection between the frequency of reports alluding to one category of news on the one hand and the strength of editorial feeling on the subject on the other. Thus the fact that more space may be devoted to political than to trade union affairs in any one edition of any newspaper does not necessarily entail that trade union affairs were in any way subsidiary issues for the editor in question. Neither does the sum of items on any subject determine or suggest the

nature of editorial policy towards them.

Doubts concerning the significance of content analysis statistics have been discussed at length in an important essay by Alan Beardsworth.<sup>1</sup> There is, he argues, 'one problem which is peculiar to content analysis, the problem of just what significance can be attached to the quantitative findings which it produces'.<sup>2</sup> The problem is an important one because, on the whole, 'the fact that quantitative results are produced is ... regarded as advantageous, in that such results offer a 'precision' which would otherwise be lacking'.<sup>3</sup> Thus, he continues,

'behind this view that precise frequencies of occurrence of content units represent significant findings concerning a text, is an important assumption. This assumption is that the frequency of occurrence of a given item is an effective and reliable index of that item's significance and importance. That is, we assume the more frequently an item occurs the more significant it is, or the more it is a focus of concern for the communicator. What is more, we also assume that the frequency actually measures that concern, which implies in turn that for example an item which occurs 20% more frequently than another item can be seen, by comparison, as 20% more significant.

This view is itself the logical conclusion of the claim that frequency counts offer precision.<sup>4</sup> Beardsworth concludes by arguing that such a position 'yields absurd results'.<sup>5</sup>

It is clear therefore that content analysis alone will not provide precise indices of editorial opinion or policies. However, study of the relative space devoted to various categories of newspaper content

1. A. Beardsworth, 'Analyzing Press Content: Some Technical and Methodological issues,' H. Christian (Ed.), The Sociology of Journalism and the Press, Sociological Review Monograph 29, (University of Keele, 1980), p. 388.

2. *ibid.*

3. *ibid.*

4. *ibid.*

5. *ibid.*



does possess a valuable descriptive significance. It also provides a measurable method of comparing and contrasting different newspaper series, including labour papers and their local competitors, thus enabling historians to 'make ... comparisons and discern particular trends'.<sup>6</sup> Twenty one subject areas have been listed to cover all aspects of reportage and other newspaper material in the Examiner and the Workman's Advocate. These specific areas have been divided roughly into the four broad categories of Local News, National News, Editorial Material and Fiction.<sup>7</sup> With the exception of the expected preponderance of advertisements, particularly from the second year of publication, four important trends in the proportions of space devoted to specific categories may be seen to develop in the case of the Examiner. Firstly, a dramatic fall took place in the amount of space consumed by local economic, industrial and trade union news from 1874 to 1878, the fall being most striking between 1875 and 1876, falling from 15.5 per cent of the total space in the former to an average of a mere 4.7 per cent in the latter. Conversely, reports on local politics remained low until 1878 when they began to occupy an average of 10.6 per cent of total space, a 414.5 per cent increase over the previous year. National and foreign news remained at a fairly stable level of around 20 per cent until 1878 when it doubled in proportion to the rest of the paper. Similarly, the fictional component also remained static at between 9 and 12 per cent of the total throughout the period 1874 to 1877 inclusive, thereafter dropping to a mere 0.6 per cent of the total space. In contrast to the Examiner, the local economic, industrial and trade union element in the Workman's Advocate increased from 5.6 per cent of total space in 1874 to 12.8 per cent in 1875, and local political news decreased in spatial significance from 1.5 per cent of total space in 1874 to nil during the following year. National and Foreign news, on the other hand, took a dramatic leap from 13 per cent in 1874 to 27.5 per cent of total space in 1875. The amount of correspondence printed

6. R. Williams, Communications, (Harmondsworth, 1966), p. 35.

7. For a fuller account of the following analysis see appendix I.

dropped from a steady 20 to 21 per cent in 1873 and 1874 to 2.9 per cent in 1875, although the early high levels are, significantly, maintained at up to 28 per cent of the total content a pace of Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr.

Space devoted to editorial comments also declined sharply between 1874 and 1875.

During 1874 and 1875, however, the content structure of the Examiner and the Workman's Advocate increasingly began to resemble each other. Note the contrast between their major categories in 1874 and the close parallels between them during the following year.

Table 3.

Highest Five News Subject Categories, as % of total content.

<u>1874</u>	
<u>Examiner</u>	<u>Workman's Advocate</u>
Local Economics, Industrial and Trade Union News	Advertisements
National and Foreign News	Correspondence
Advertisements	Editorial Comment
Fiction	Fiction
Correspondence	Local Economic, Industrial, Trade Union News
<u>1875</u>	
Advertisements	Advertisements
National and Foreign News	National and Foreign News
Local Economic, Industrial, Trade Union News	Local Economic, Industrial, Trade Union News
Fiction	Editorial Comment
Local Politics	National Economic News

Content analysis of this kind is also a useful method of comparing labour newspapers with their local competitors. The significance of such analysis lies in the fact that it suggests the general emphasis placed on certain news categories by different editors. Such comparisons illustrate the different ways in which editors approached the same body of newsworthy material, and underline their differing criteria of selection. Thus, when the content structure of the Examiner is compared to that of the Wolverhampton Chronicle, and the Workman's Advocate to that of the

Merthyr Telegraph, some interesting discrepancies appear. Both the Wolverhampton Chronicle and the Merthyr Telegraph were characterised by a relatively heavy preponderance of local political (17.7 and 17.6 respectively) and Crime news (9.3 and 11.2 per cent respectively). In marked contrast, the Examiner and the Workmen's Advocate printed very little local political news and virtually no crime or 'Police' news, concentrating instead on local economic, industrial and trade union news, and National and Foreign news items. It is clear, therefore, that these two groups of newspapers, the Examiner and the Workmen's Advocate on the one hand and the Wolverhampton Chronicle and the Merthyr Telegraph on the other, developed distinct editorial formulae based on different interpretations of the nature of the market and of the requirements of the readership.

In addition to the application of an editorial formula, the content structures of the Owen and the Morgan newspapers were also determined to a large extent by their methods of news collection. The precise division of labour involved in the process of writing and setting up these newspapers remains unclear, but four main groups of contributors deserve to be mentioned in this respect, namely editors, journalists, news agencies and readers.

In both cases, the work of gathering and collating items of local news devolved principally on to the editors themselves. Thus not only did they control the administration, publication and printing of their papers, but they were also active journalists. Frequently they went even further and created news items through their interventions in local political and industrial disputes. In order to fill their newspapers, both editors wrote extended commentaries on newsworthy events, articles which were often no more than lengthy compendia of local news items. In fact, editors were often so busy collecting new items that they were obliged to delegate much of the responsibility of composing the final lay-out of the paper to their printers. The results were not always to the editors' satisfaction, and accidents were known to occur. For example, Owen apologised for a

nistaken insertion concerning a miners meeting in the Forest of Dean in the local edition of the Examiner in December 1874. The printer, he explained, 'in the temporary absence of the editor on business, inserted Mr. Brown's address in the Forest of Dean Examiner without being aware that he was doing wrong'.<sup>8</sup>

Both editors employed very small staffs of journalists on their labour newspapers. Owen was assisted by J.H.Knight, previously a journalist with the Wednesbury Times, whose specialist knowledge of the South Staffordshire trades was of particular value to the Examiner series. Morgan, similarly, employed Ioan Egvest, a journalist and translator, and maintained an anonymous 'Special Correspondent', most probably a trade union official, in North Staffordshire. Much of the detailed local industrial news, moreover, was supplied to both editors by local trade union branches and officials.

National and foreign news, however, was more difficult to collect. Traditionally, provincial newspapers had widely used the 'scissors and paste' technique, thus reproducing news items from the London papers. By the early 1870's this method had been rendered wholly inadequate by the ramifications of railway technology on the distribution of newspapers. As the provinces became less remote, provincial newspapers for the first time were forced to compete directly with the London papers which they had plagiarised. As A.J.Lee has explained

'Bristol, Norwich, Birmingham and Southampton were still out of reach of the London mornings by the start of business hours in 1868, but they were arriving well beforehand by 1875'.<sup>9</sup>

The early 1870's, therefore, were crucially important years for newspapers and their editors. Competition became more acute, and as

8. Miner and Workmen's Examiner 12 December 1874.

9. A.J.Lee, Origins op.cit., p.59.

a result national and foreign news had to be collected very much more quickly. Some 'scissors and paste' journalism continued, for example in Owen's snippets from Punch and Morgan's translations from the Beehive, but these were increasingly articles of an occasional character. The major development which rejuvenated provincial newspapers in the early 1870's was the nationalisation of the Telegraph system in February 1870. The telegraph was without doubt in widespread use by 1873, although its early application may be overemphasised. Charles Baker, editor of the Newspaper World provided a salutary reminder of this in 1931 when reminiscing of his duties as a young provincial journalist in 1871.

'One of my duties as a junior reporter on the old Maidstone Journal was to go every Monday evening to the railway station to get at the earliest moment the first available copy of that day's Evening Standard. Out of this my enterprising editor cut the Mark Lane reports and headed them "By Electric Telegraph"'.<sup>10</sup>

From 1870 onwards, the Press Agencies assumed positions of great importance to provincial newspaper journalism. Morgan, for example, paid for the services of the Central News Agency from 1873. Founded by William Saunders M.P. in 1871, this agency had, according to its own Jubilee Souvenir

'been energetically educating the provincial papers to take general services for five years, and had been making considerable use of the "Company Telegraphs" when the Telegraph Act...., by which the government took over a monopoly of telegraphic communications and standardised a "Press Rate" for newspapers, opened up enormous possibilities for development'.<sup>11</sup>

10. Central News, Diamond Jubilee Souvenir 1871-1931 (1931), p.21.

11. *ibid.* 17.

The potential for growth was indeed enormous; by July 1871, the Scotsman contained sixteen columns of telegraphed news, or thirty seven thousand words, telegraphed over four hundred miles.<sup>12</sup> Other Press Agencies followed, such as the National Press Agency Limited in 1873.<sup>13</sup>

At the same time other press entrepreneurs explored new areas of press syndication. According to the Newspaper Press of March 1871, one 'clever writer' in the late 1860's

'agreed to contribute to certain papers a leader or two a week, together with a London Letter, in return for one column of advertising space, which he proposed to fill with advertisements of a non-medical character, which he would collect and print and forward stereoblocks to the newspaper, so that there would be some saving in type and composition'.<sup>14</sup>

There is no evidence to suggest that either Owen or Morgan ever employed freelance writers to compose their editorial columns, but Owen did print a syndicated London Letter in the later editions of the Examiner. Both, however, used the services of news agencies for national and foreign news reports, receiving much of the material in the form of stereotyped blocks. Cylinders of type delivered weekly were inked and printed on to one sheet of newsprint which, when folded, composed the third and sixth page of the paper. Local news, advertisements or leaders printed on the fourth and the fifth page thus completed one half of an eight paged newspaper. In both the Examiner and the Workman's Advocate these 'split-printed' sheets of pre-composed newsprint are clearly distinguishable by their smaller, more compact print from the editors' own printed material.

Feature columns in the Examiner, and other occasional articles including material of the London Club Gossip variety, were also syndicated

12. The Newspaper Press 1 August 1871, No.57, Vol.5.

13. National Press Agency Ltd, Our Silver Anniversary 1873-1898 (1898).

14. The Newspaper Press 1 March 1871, No. 52, Vol.5.

by the metropolitan news merchants. The majority of feature and special interest articles, however, were contributed by local writers, and consisted chiefly of brief pieces of educational value. These included a series on labour parliamentary representation by Henry S. Vince, an examination of Britain's Military System' by H.M.Hunt, a local trade union leader, and a series on Irish history by the Potteries Republican, Henry Wedgewood. Other articles by local writers and amateur scientists such as G.T.Lawley, John Randall and John Olliver developed theses on local history, topography and geology. In keeping with Owen's nonconformist persuasion a biographical series on local ministers were published during 1875 and 1876. R.Johnson has drawn attention to the importance of the Chartist or the radical newspaper of the 1830's and 1840's as an 'educational medium',<sup>15</sup>. Despite the fact that neither the Examiner nor the Workman's Advocate was 'saturated with an educational content',<sup>16</sup> to the extent to which he suggests the Northern Star to be, working class education remained an important issue for both Owen and Morgan. In an introduction to his series on 'Our Military System' in the Examiner in June 1874 H.M.Hunt described his object as being 'to educate himself and his readers',<sup>17</sup>. Owen, in his own introduction to the same series, argued the editorial view of the educational significance of his paper.

'It is a growing desire for this education that has found vent in the establishment of a journal which has no regard for the crotchets of the rich and the great, which has no patronage to render it subservient, but

15. R.Johnson, "Really Useful Knowledge": radical education and working-class culture, 1790-1848; in J. Clarke, C.Critchler and Richard Johnson, Working Class Culture : Studies in history and theory, (1979), pp. 83-4.

16. *ibid.*

17. South Staffordshire Examiner 13 June 1874. See Appendix VII

which will advocate the great questions of the age,  
wholly and solely from a workingman's point of view'.<sup>18</sup>

Fiction occupied an important place in both the Examiner and the Workman's Advocate. As with features and occasional articles, short stories and poems were contributed by local readers and syndicated through publishing agencies. Since the formation of W.F. Tillotson's 'Fiction Bureau' in 1873, the first systematic attempt to syndicate new fiction in newspapers<sup>19</sup>, serialised novels and short stories became more easily available to cheap provincial newspapers. Between December 1873 and October 1877 eighty 'non-sensational' short stories were published in the Forest of Dean Examiner, the longest surviving local edition of the Examiner, sixteen of which were serialised for two consecutive weeks or longer. Many were written by such relatively well known authors as Eliza Meteyard, William Wilson Turnbull, Mary Howitt and Captain Mayne Reid. The latter was a radical adventurer whose stories were 'radical in tone ... and bitterly hostile to Toryism'<sup>20</sup>.

In Morgan's Workman's Advocate, however, only one novelette was serialised throughout the two and a half years of the paper's lifespan. Significantly it was one of Howard Evans' tales of agricultural labour, first published in the Labourer's Chronicle.<sup>21</sup> Both the Examiner and the Workman's Advocate, moreover, published considerable amounts of poetry, much of it written by readers, and some by the editors and journalists on the papers' staffs. Owen and Jeffrey had their own poems and songs printed in the Examiner, and the Amdiffynnydd y Gweithiwr under the judicious sub-editorship of Ioan Egwest and 'Brythonfryn' organised poetry competitions for their readers.

18. *ibid.*

19. R.D. Altick. The English Common Reader, (Chicago 1957), pp. 356-7.

20. Mayne Reid to W.E. Adams, 29 September 1879, in G. Pollard 'Novels in Newspapers. Some unpublished letters of Captain Mayne Reid, Review of English Studies XVIII (1942), pp. 72-85. Many were also syndicated through other provincial newspapers, for example 'Locksley Hall' in the Worcestershire Valley Reporter, 11 September 1874.

21. Workman's Advocate 13 June 1874, 26 June 1874.



## ii) Format and style

In addition to the balance of content in labour newspapers, it is important also to consider the ways in which news material was organised and the style in which it was written. Both format and style reflect a number of significant decisions made by editors, and as such provide valuable information concerning the general approaches of the editors to their respective newspapers.

Differences in choice of format are reflected at their most elementary level in the relative sizes of the respective papers. Owen's Examiner was the largest at twenty two inches by thirty two inches unfolded, whilst Morgan's Workman's Advocate and Amddiffynnydd y Gweithiwr measured only fifteen inches by twenty inches unfolded. From October 1877 the Miner was reduced to seventeen and a half inches by twenty three inches unfolded, whilst Morgan's Star of the West of January 1876 was enlarged to twenty one inches by twenty six inches unfolded. The number of columns per page also varied from six in the Examiner to three in the Workman's Advocate.

Titles were printed in bold Latin or Gothic script and were devoid of symbol or of other images.<sup>22</sup> In fact there is a marked absence of any drawing, sketch or cartoon in any of these papers, and advertisements which provided their own printed designs were clearly of considerable value to the editor if only to relieve the unbroken tedium of the closely printed page. Headlines were of barely larger type than the article print, banner headlines being the innovation of a later generation of newspaper editors.

In the early 1870's provincial local newspapers were in the process of evolving an identity and a successful format formula. In general, the format of the Examiner conformed to the pattern being developed by such provincial local papers, particularly as regards paper size and the distribution of news items, leaders and advertisements. Owen's object, therefore, was to produce a 'modern' local newspaper, the format of which was intended to

22. Contrast to many earlier radical newspapers, e.g. the French Revolutionary symbolism in the Red Republican of 1850.

be as visually attractive to readers as that of any local competitor. In contrast, Morgan abandoned this orthodox pattern with the discontinuation of his Merthyr Times in 1873. The format of the Workman's Advocate and Amddiffymdd y Gweithiwr contrasted sharply both with its predecessor and with its successor, the Star of the West, bearing a closer resemblance to the pattern developed by radical periodicals of a previous generation.<sup>23</sup> Compared to the Examiner, in which news items and other material were generally grouped and distributed in a reasonably well organised and identifiable way, the Workman's Advocate was a singularly disorganised paper, with news items randomly interspersed with letters, editorial leaders, advertisements and fiction.

Furthermore, Owen and Morgan wrote their leading articles in distinctly different writing styles. Style, being an expression of the individuality of the writer, reveals something of the character of the editor. As in his approach to the format of his papers, Owen developed a journalistic writing style not unlike that used in other local newspapers of the time. Factual, clear and without rhetoric, Owen's leading articles were modelled on an evolving style of contemporary journalism.

Morgan, on the other hand, was considerably more idiosyncratic in style. Dispensing with both the format and the style of local journalism in September 1873, the Workman's Advocate revived in a most energetic form the language of Owenite socialism. Leader columns and Morgan's satirical pieces were frequently laced with references to Robert Owen's life and work, and the editor clearly took a deep personal interest in the Owenite tradition. Morgan was at one time a spiritualist, 'having attended a weekly seance for some months as an enquirer after truth and after having read several books on the subject, both English and American'.<sup>24</sup> Despite his rejection of spiritualism in December 1873 on the grounds of it being

23. See for example the format of The Red Republican and Friend of the People 1850-51.

24. Workman's Advocate 13 December 1873.

a 'false religion',<sup>25</sup> the experience left him with a valuable journalistic technique. The proceedings of closed Coal Owners Association meetings were ingeniously reported and discussed by a 'spirit medium', reportedly present, though invisibly, at each important meeting.<sup>26</sup> Other political and historical issues were also raised through the idiom of spiritualist fiction and satire, itself not an uncommon technique in the fringe journalism of the early 1870's.<sup>27</sup>

The underlying tone of the language is another problematic area of concern. Both papers, however different in format and style, were engaged in the gathering and the selling of news items which were largely neglected by other local newspapers. This they both considered to be their primary function, and from this stemmed their often exaggerated sense of self-importance. The tone adopted by the editors, moreover, as Louis T. Milic has argued, 'expresses the relationship of the writer to the reader'.<sup>28</sup> Unlike style in itself, tone is 'a question of value, (of) what is important to the writer, and, therefore, what he encourages the reader to agree with'.<sup>29</sup> Editorial values of this kind cannot be discussed within the descriptive parameters of this chapter, rather they need to be interpreted within a different framework of analysis. The values of editorial policy, therefore, will be discussed at some length in the sixth chapter of the thesis. Before initiating that discussion, however, two further aspects of the Examiner and the Workmen's Advocate need to be considered, namely their readership and their financial structures.

25. *ibid.*

26. See for example Workman's Advocate 16 May 1874.

27. E.g., F.H. Brown, 'What John Smith Saw on the Moon', in Workmen's Advocate, 1871. See also S. Butler's Erwhon (1872).

28. Louis T. Milic, 'Tone in Steele's "Tatler"', in D.H. Bond and W.R. McLeod (Eds), Newsletter to Newspapers: Eighteenth Century Journalism, (West Virginia University, 1977), p.41.

29. *ibid.*

## CHAPTER 4

### READERSHIP

In 1850 F.K.Hunt observed that 'all men, now-a-days, who read at all, read newspapers'.<sup>1</sup> He surmised that

'they look to their newspapers to amuse their leisure, to advance their trade, to seek how best they may satisfy their wants, to watch how their favourite opinions are progressing, how their friends are praised and their foes denounced.'<sup>2</sup>

Others, however, were not prepared to leave it at that. Despite the many changes in the ideological contents of newspapers over the years, there were still persons who thought it necessary to remain concerned about the presence of an expanding radical press which was aimed explicitly at a working-class readership. Thomas Wright, the Journeyman Engineer, in particular was angry about the kind of 'intelligence' printed by 'the lower types of weekly newspapers'.<sup>3</sup> In 1867 he published a scathing attack on the contemporary labour press, accusing it directly of corrupting the minds of its working-class readers.

'The working man who reads and believes in newspapers of the "Crusher" class soon becomes a discontented and unhappy person, and learns to regard himself as an oppressed member of society, on whom all other ranks of society constantly wage warfare. He becomes a person of intensely class feeling, and believes in the

1. F.K.Hunt, The Fourth Estate: Contributions towards a History of Newspapers and of the Liberty of the Press, (1850), p.1.

2. *ibid.* p.2.

3. T. Wright, 'On a Possible Popular Culture', Contemporary Review, 40, 1881, p.26.

sentiment that whatever is beneficial to or approved by people above him, must necessarily be antagonistic to his interest.... Men of this kind, narrow-minded, ignorant, ill-informed men, whose ideas upon the constitution of society and the relative position and value of its various sections have been derived from the toadying of papers whose circulation depends upon their persistent writing up of the "Working Man" are among the greatest obstacles to the social progress of the working classes'.<sup>4</sup>

Two decades later A. Reid approached the same problem with greater subtlety and discrimination. Reid agreed that the power of the press in general to influence the minds of its readers, particularly those who were artisans or workers, was great and enduring. He attempted to explain it in the following way:

'The artisan, for obvious reasons, is more influenced by the views of his paper than is a richer man. He has, on the whole, less opportunity of reading contradictory papers, less means of hearing opinions otherwise than his own paper, and a much profounder admiration and respect for the editorial judgment .... The workman... sees a knowledge which must seem very profound, and is certainly uttered with most dogmatic and convincing authority, and insensibly he is moved as the journalist wills'.<sup>5</sup>

In this respect, Reid concluded, it was the provincial, rather than the national or the metropolitan, press which exercised the greater political

4. T. Wright, Some Habits and Customs of the Working Classes, (1867), pp. 34-5 .
5. A. Reid, 'How a provincial newspaper is managed', Nineteenth Century, 1886 XX, p. 392.

power over the minds of its readers. Reid, writing in 1886, also made the interesting observation that

'The London daily press scarcely touches the genuine London workpeople, who wait for their weekly paper at the week end, whereas the provincial daily press does reach the wage earners'.<sup>6</sup>

Other contemporaries were less concerned. E.G. Salmon pertinently observed that, far from being the 'real representative of popular feeling',<sup>7</sup>

'If the influence of the working-man's paper was as great as many imagine, the whole fabric of British wealth and society would be immediately undermined, destroyed and reorganised on a socialist, or semi-socialist, basis. In truth that influence is small'.<sup>8</sup>

However, he added, ominously if rather ambiguously,

'Whatever influence the working-class press may have exercised in the past, one thing is certain - as the masses open their eyes more and more to the facts, that influence will probably expand'.<sup>9</sup>

Contemporary opinion concerning the influence of the press in general, and the working-class press in particular, on popular thought and action was, therefore, divided. There was, however, a strong sense among many contemporary observers that the 'radical tradition' in working-class journalism had not been wholly subverted and defeated by the 1860's and the 1870's. They may have disagreed about the dangers which they thought this tradition did or did not pose to social and political stability, but there was substantial common ground where their recognition of its continuing

6. *ibid.*

7. 'A Distinguished Writer', The Press and Public Service, (1857), p.6.

8. E.G. Salmon, 'What the Working Classes Read', Nineteenth Century, 20 July 1886, p. 114.

9. *ibid.* p.117.

presence in working-class life and culture was concerned.

In this chapter some of the general characteristics of those people who read the Examiners, the Workman's Advocate and the Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr will be outlined. It will examine the social geography of the areas in which these papers were known to circulate, and identify broadly the groups of workers who constituted the majority of the readership.

#### 1) The Social Context.

Publishers of the various papers of the Labour Newspaper System possessed a sound knowledge of the industrial and organizational contexts within which they knew their newspapers would have to circulate. Editors in particular were, of necessity, acutely aware of the complex web of trades and occupations in which different groups of workers were employed in a large and densely populated area of provincial Britain which extended from North Staffordshire through the Black Country and Worcestershire to Bristol, the Forest of Dean and South Wales. Part of their skill lay in assessing the relative strengths and importance of various groups of workers in these areas, and in choosing which kinds of news and other general information to include in various editions. The style and editorial policies of the papers in general were also carefully weighed with an eye to the differing sectional interests and concerns of the specific groups of workers who formed the bulk of their readers.

The following survey of occupations and organizations will attempt to summarize briefly the principal types and conditions of work and to describe in outline the development of the main trade unions and other working class organizations in the areas in which labour newspapers were known to circulate during the late 1860's and the early 1870's.

#### North Staffordshire.

The Earthenware Pottery industry was, along with coal mining, one

of the two largest employers of manpower in North Staffordshire. The industry was predominantly centred on a conglomeration of towns and parishes which included Burslem, Hanley, Longton, Tunstall, Newcastle under Lyme, Wolstanton, Fenton, Shelton and Stoke on Trent. During the 1850's the whole area experienced rapid population growth ranging from an 11.7 per cent increase in the Township of Burslem between 1851 and 1861 to 38 per cent increase in the Township of Hanley during the same ten year period.<sup>1</sup> Such a rate of growth continued in the three Registrar's Districts of the Potteries throughout the 1860's.

Table 4. Population Growth in North Staffordshire 1861 to 1871.

<u>Superintendent Registrar's District</u>	<u>1861</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>% increase.</u>
Newcastle Under Lyme	24567	30225	23
Wolstanton	54347	68932	26.8
Stoke upon Trent	71308	89262	25.2

Within the principal towns of Wolstanton and Stoke on Trent, the Pottery industry was the largest employer of both males and females.

Table 5.

Males and Females aged 20 and upwards employed in Earthenware Manufacture in 1861

<u>District</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	
Newcastle	318	31	
Wolstanton	3859	1493	
Stoke on Trent	<u>5813</u>	<u>3338</u>	
Totals	9990	4862	10

In the County of Staffordshire as a whole the Earthenware industry employed a total of 27,432 workers in 1861, of whom 10,076 were women.

This figure increased to 34,651, including 13,923 women in 1871 and increased



again, though at a slower rate of growth, to 36230, including 15694<sup>women</sup> in 1881. The Pottery industry itself fell broadly into three groups, the Earthenware, the Porcelain and the Fireclay. Within the Earthen ware and porcelain branches of the industry workers were organised into twenty one trades: clay makers, throwers, turners, handlers, pressers, modellers, moulders, saggar makers, biscuit firemen and their placers, printers and their transferers, glost firemen and their placers, enamellers, kiln men, warehouse hands, painters, burnishers, gilders and labourers. The Porcelain trades included also the engravers, whilst the Fireclay group consisted of only the firebrick makers and their labourers.<sup>11</sup> The majority of the potters were paid on a piecework basis and members of the more skilled trades were contracted by the year, at least until 1866,<sup>12</sup> by the Pottery firms to produce given articles of earthenware at an agreed price. The firm provided the materials and the workshop necessary for the production of the pottery goods. This form of work and the independence which it afforded to many working potters, particularly the skilled contractors rendered the potter, according to evidence given to the Select Committee on Masters and Operatives in 1856, entirely his own master, as is his time and the number of persons whom he may employ to assist him' ... the operative can work leisurely or industriously,<sup>13</sup>. Consequently, potters developed independent and customary patterns of work which survived the introduction of machinery and well into the 1870's. For example, one Factory Inspector reported in April 1875 that

'very little work is done on the Monday and Tuesday.

I have known a bank (that is where they make pots) call to another bank at 2 o'clock in the afternoon of Monday to go to a rabbit race for Monday and Tuesday for moneys subscribed by both banks alike, and having won it they

11. 'Labour Statistics. Return of Wages Published between 1830 and 1886, Part 1. Average rates of wages paid in the North Staffordshire district during the year 1874, (1887); G. Phillips Bevan, The Industrial Classes and Industrial Statistics, (1876), p.151 - 2.
12. Minutes of Evidence taken before Select Committee on Masters and Operatives, Evidence of M.D.Holland, 29 April 1856, (2402).
13. A Redgrave, Report, Inspector of Factories, October 1864 (1865); Potteries Examiner 12 August 1871.

would go and drink it all.'<sup>14</sup>

The same inspector also reported that

' there is a line that you may draw on the map from the Potteries, across the country to Birmingham, through the Black Country and to Wolverhampton, and between that and Lancashire, and the Potteries and Chester, they never will go to work sooner than 8 o'clock in the morning if they can help it'.<sup>15</sup>

Frequently the result of this predominantly male lack of industrial discipline was that 'women would have to work Friday night and much of Saturday to make up the tale of the work which had been lost on the Monday and Tuesday'.<sup>16</sup>

The trades in which women were the majority were Printers' transferers, enamellers, burnishers and handlers. The expansion of women's employment in the pottery industry became the source of much bitterness during the 1870's and after. One potter argued that

'Male labour in the flat pressers branch of manufacture is fast going out of date. The women are superseding the men in all directions. We expect next to hear of female ovenmen, kilnmen and saggar-makers. The jolly in the granite ware business is falling into the hands of the females .... The mother and wife will become obsolete...'<sup>17</sup>

As early as 1856 one pottery manufacturer from Stoke on Trent reported that women were engaged 'to a large extent' at his works.<sup>18</sup> In the mid 1850's

14. Minutes of Evidence to the Report from the Select Committee on the Factory and Workshop Acts Part II, Session 8 February to 15 August 1876, evidence of A.Baker, 27 April 1875 (736).

15. *ibid.* 27 April 1875, (659).

16. *ibid.* (736).

17. Potteries Examiner 23 March 1878.

18. Minutes of Evidence taken before Select Committee on Masters and Operatives. Evidence of M.D.Hollands, 29 April 1856 (2400).

both young boys and girls were taken in, to serve seven year apprenticeships. Youths worked mainly as turners, pressers, modellers, moulders, printers, warehousehands and gilders. William Owen was himself apprenticed as a turner in his youth, one of the highest paid trades which a boy could then enter.<sup>19</sup>

Until 1866 adult workers were usually engaged by the year by the pottery firms, but a trade union struggle in that year against the annual hiring of labour resulted in the abolition of the practice in all but a few workshops in the Potteries. After 1866 the normal procedure was the submission of monthly notices of the termination of employment.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the high degree of independence at work which many potters enjoyed before the introduction of sophisticated machinery, which, in the mid 1860's was still comparatively rare in the Potteries,<sup>21</sup> working conditions were generally harsh and unhealthy. A certifying surgeon under the Factory Acts reported that pottery work in Stoke and Newcastle in 1875 was

'a very unwholesome labour in many of its branches; for instance, those portions in which the clay is made up into the form of pottery, by reason of the dust which is given off; to what are called the finishing processes no special evil attaches except what pertains to their sedentary character'.<sup>22</sup>

Another factory inspector reported that

'There are some branches of the earthenware trade which are almost certain death in three years. I refer to the scouring of china'.<sup>23</sup>

19. Labour Statistics, Return of wages 1874 op.cit; Staffordshire Sentinel 14 October 1912.

20. Potteries Examiner 12 August 1871.

21. Report of A.Redgrave, Inspector of Factories, October 1864 (1865) p.17.

22. Minutes of Evidence to the Report from the Select Committee on the Factory and Workshop Acts op.cit, evidence of A.Baker 27 April 1875 (774)

23. ibid. Evidence of A.Redgrave, 20 April 1875 (205).

Some potters, particularly the mould runners, worked under very great heat. Mainly children of both sexes, the runners would dart

'now into a temperature of 120°, then into another probably at 60° and lastly into the open air'.<sup>24</sup>

Wages in the pottery industry varied enormously between the trades. The maximum weekly wage in 1874 was 50 shillings, earned only by glost firemen and biscuit firemen, the aristocrats of the industry. Kilnmen, one rung below, earned between 36 and 45 shillings per week. Clay makers, throwers, pressers, modellers and moulders received between 36 and 40 shillings per week, whilst turners, handlers, saggar makers, biscuit placers, printers, glost placers, warehousehands, painters and gilders earned only between 25 and 35 shillings per week. On the lowest incomes were the labourers (18 shillings per week), and the female trades - printers' transferers and enamellers (11 to 12 shillings per week) and burnishers, who often earned less than 9 shillings and 10 pence per week. The majority of potters worked on piecework earnings, although placers and warehousemen were usually paid by the day. This pattern was repeated in more or less the same way in the porcelain trades. In most sections of the industry, youths, or more specifically, boys, were paid from 17 to 20 shillings per week as turners, modellers and printers, and between 10 and 16 shillings per week as moulders and gilders. Pressers and warehousehands earned under 10 shillings per week in 1874.<sup>25</sup>

Many observers noticed the wide gulf which the subcontracting system created between the various pottery trades. Some were extremely concerned by the social effects of such variations on status and income. Factory Inspector R. Baker was struck in October 1864 by

24. Report of R. Baker, Inspector of Factories, 31 October 1865, p.103.

25. Labour Statistics op.cit.,; G. Phillips Brown, op.cit., p.151-3.

'the great lack of any middle class of workmen, between those who appear to be utterly improvident and wasteful, and the "careful", prudent and energetic men ... who thrive so well in business...'.<sup>26</sup>

In general, however, both master potters and their assistants faced the same economic problems and had to contend with the same employers. A cup and saucer maker, for example, would normally employ three attendants and a women sponger, whom he would pay by the score, on top of which he would pay a certain sum to his employer for milling the clay and for supplying the jolly.<sup>27</sup> In times of bad trade the manufacturer would reduce piecework payments to the master potter, who in turn would cut his losses by reducing his payments to his assistants. The master potter's minimisation of Assistants wages, however, could not guarantee his immunisation from the vagaries of the trade cycle, and the issue of wages, according to one pottery manufacturer, was the source

'of an undercurrent of dissatisfaction on the part of the employees that, coming to the surface at intervals, has produced no little friction between them and their employers'.<sup>28</sup>

Apart from the wages question and the previously mentioned annual hiring system which survived in pockets in the Potteries after 1866, the most significant and enduring grievance of the potters was the issue of 'good from oven'. As far back as 1856 this issue provided 'one of the main sources of industrial disputes in Pottery Districts'.<sup>29</sup> The hollow ware and flat pressers in particular were vulnerable to losses throughout the production process, and their goods were especially liable

26. Report of R. Baker, Inspector of Factories, October 1864 (1865), p.102

27. H. Owen, The Staffordshire Potter, (1901), p.323.

28. Pottery Gazette January 1899.

29. Minutes of Evidence taken before Select Committee on Masters and Operatives, op.cit. evidence of W. Maitland, potter in clay department, 6 May 1856, (2589).

to damage when placers put the work in the oven, when the work was being carried from the oven to the warehouse and in the warehouse itself when baskets were being emptied. In general, it was the flattest and largest goods which were most subject to damage in the oven and in subsequent processes. The pressers, however, were paid only for those goods which remained undamaged at the end, even though the damage may not have been as a result of their own mistakes.

Consequently it was around the issue of wages, health, annual hiring and 'good from oven' that the trade unions of the potters were established. Master potters were on the whole heavily unionised by the late 1860's, and one observer commented in June 1871 that 'the ovenmen, the flat pressers, the hollow ware pressers, the turners, the mouldmakers, and some other minor societies are generally speaking well united'.<sup>30</sup> In that year, for example, there were in the Potteries six lodges of the Hollow Ware Pressers Union, established in February 1871 with 400 members and £200 in their treasury. Unemployed members were to receive between six and ten shillings,, with an additional shilling for their wives and sixpence for each child. Subscription to the union was eight pence per week, with a sick society subscription of fourpence per week. Members received 7 shillings per week sick pay, £5 at death and £2.10.0. at death of wife. The Hanley and District Lodge met at the offices of the Potteries Examiner, initially at Marsh Street, Hanley.<sup>31</sup> By July 1871 the union had grown to 555 financial members and possessed funds of £250 with an additional £60 in the sick society.<sup>32</sup> In August 1871 the Amalgamated Hollow Ware Pressers amalgamated with the Flat Ware Pressers Union.<sup>33</sup> In 1871 six branches of the Flat Ware Pressers met weekly in the Potteries, the Hanley branch, similarly, met in the offices of the Potteries Examiner.<sup>34</sup>

30. Potteries Examiner 17 June 1871.

31. *ibid.* 21 April 1871.

32. *ibid.* 8 July 1871.

33. *ibid.* 26 August 1871.

34. *ibid.* 17 March 1871.

In August 1873 a separate Operative Flat Pressers Society was formed in the Staffordshire Potteries,<sup>35</sup> but significantly was dissolved in January 1877 due to being 'overweighed' in the beneficiary branch of the association by an unusual amount of sickness and death during the last few years ....

Potters asthma', it was stated, had 'exhausted the funds'.<sup>36</sup> Also in the spring of 1871 there were seven lodges of the Oven Men's Society, six lodges of the Mould Makers, Five lodges of the Crate Makers, five lodges of the Turners Society, one lodge of the China Saucer Makers and two lodges of the Packers Union.<sup>37</sup> Many of these Societies were old and well established by the early 1870's, some dating back to the Owenite agitation in the Potteries in the early 1830's.<sup>38</sup>

By the mid 1870's however, only a small number of these trade unions were in a healthy financial position. Some, such as the Hollow Ware Pressers Society were 'full of sap and vitality',<sup>39</sup> and, compared to many other local societies, the Ovenmen, Kilnmen and Saggars Makers were said to be 'flourishing'.<sup>40</sup> Even in the chilly atmosphere of the late Seventies the members of the small, compact and financially sound Turners Society were described by one local commentator as being 'active and courageous'.<sup>41</sup> The Printers and Transferers Society had also met with 'marked successes',<sup>42</sup> and had succeeded in recruiting new members. On the whole however, the tide of unionism which swept the potters into many remarkable local victories during the early 1870's began to ebb from mid-decade. The Flat Pressers, for example, had suffered 'many severed breaches in its ramparts',<sup>43</sup> the Slip Makers were virtually extinct, the Crate Makers had suffered serious

35. *ibid.* 16 August 1873.

36. *ibid.* 6 January 1871.

37. *ibid.* 17 March 1871.

38. J.F.C. Harrison, Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America, (1969) p.210; H. Owen, The Staffordshire Potter, *op.cit*; Provisional London Trades Council, UK First Annual Trades Union Directory, (1861).

39. Potteries Examiner 13 May 1876.

40. *ibid.* 13 May 1876.

41. *ibid.* 13 May 1876.

42. *ibid.* 13 May 1876; 30 October 1875.

43. *ibid.* 13 May 1876.

reverses and the Handlers and Throwers societies were 'small and little known'. If, by the late 1870's the tide of unionism had turned, it is equally clear that a decade earlier the potters of North Staffordshire, despite their many problems and grievances, had been in confident mood. They were aware of their long history of successful trade unionism, resistance to employers and independence at work, a combination of which in the context of the general labour unrest of the early 1870's had provided the conditions in which an independent working class press could flourish.

The other large employer of North Staffordshire labour was coal mining. In Wolstanton and Stoke on Trent there were some 2306 and 1436 coal miners respectively in 1861, whilst in Newcastle under Lyme coalminers outnumbered potters by nearly three to one, with 996 coal miners to only 318 potters.<sup>44</sup> Coal mining was an important industry throughout the region in which labour newspapers circulated in the 1870's, and coal miners formed a substantial section of their readership. In Staffordshire as a whole over thirty three thousand persons were engaged in the mining of coal in 1861, and just over thirty thousand in 1871. By the early 1870's there were, additionally, 3504 male coal miners in Shropshire and a slightly smaller number in Gloucestershire. Eastwards in Derbyshire, over twelve thousand men were engaged in coal mining, and in Monmouthshire and South Wales there were nearly fifty six thousand coal miners. According to the Census of 1871, therefore, the coal mining population of Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Shropshire, Gloucestershire, Monmouthshire and South Wales totalled over a hundred thousand, over half of whom lived and worked in the coalfields of South Wales.

During the coal boom of the early 1870's new pits were sunk in the districts surrounding Stoke on Trent, and the surveyor of one such enterprise believed that it was possible to excavate four million tons of good coal and some ironstone from one pit alone.<sup>45</sup> Many of these new pits were thought

44. Census of England and Wales, Population Tables II, p.482.

45 E.Hedley to Directors, Ivy House and Northwood Colliery Co.Ltd., 6 September 1872, Lee Crowder MSS 211.



to be 'high class collieries', yielding profits of up to £8000 per annum each for many years before exhaustion.<sup>46</sup> Coal in North Staffordshire was mined out in large blocks, and each miner's produce was measured by a 'butty', or coal subcontractor, rather than weighed by a check-weighman. The 'butty system' figures prominently amongst the plethora of miners' grievances in the district. One Broad Meadow miner swore that 'if it was not for the butties we should not have half as many strikes and lockouts and petty disputes in Staffordshire'.<sup>47</sup> It was generally acknowledged that the butty measuring system was 'no doubt ... liable to abuse'.<sup>48</sup> One miner expressed the fears and doubts of the working miners of North Staffordshire concerning the butties. 'I don't mean to say that butties are dishonest', he explained, 'but I would prefer having my material weighed, and a check weighman there to see that justice is done'.<sup>49</sup> In August 1871 one hundred miners struck work at the Bucknall Collieries in protest against the 'Burdens of the Butty System', claiming that

'twelve months ago we could earn our day's wages in two and a half hours a day less than the time they want to fix now. This is the doing of the butties, and not of the masters'.<sup>50</sup>

Another miner advised the loaders to 'learn all departments of work in a pit' in order to undercut the privileges of the driftsman and the butties.<sup>51</sup>

Long working hours was another grievance of the working miners of North Staffordshire. In the majority of cases miners worked between eleven and a half and twelve hours a day in the pits. Because of the proliferation of 'so many different classes of workmen',<sup>52</sup> in the North Staffordshire pits, however, this issue was a more difficult one to combat; indeed an

46. *ibid.* 18 October 1872.

47. *Potteries Examiner* 19 July 1873.

48. 'The Black Country', review essay, *Edinburgh Review*, April 1863, p.425.

49. *Potteries Examiner* 19 July 1873.

50. *ibid.* 19 August 1871.

51. *ibid.* 14 April 1871.

52. *Wigan Observer* 22 April 1870.

eight hour agitation was only commenced by the Staffordshire colliers in November 1871 following the triumphs of the Newcastle strikes.<sup>53</sup>

Wages amongst the districts approximately ten thousand coal miners averaged eighteen shillings a week in 1871. In that year a wage agitation was commenced for an increase of 10 per cent under the auspices of a new miners' trade union, the Amalgamated Association of Miners (A.A.M.). The miners of North Staffordshire had been organised into local unions before in their history, but each previous attempt had proved to be dilatory and temporary. The A.A.M., founded in Lancashire in 1869, began to recruit members in the North Staffordshire area from the spring of 1870 onwards. They were, however, faced with many grave difficulties. Lyons, an A.A.M. recruiting agent reported to the Wrexham Conference of his union in April 1870 that 'the men had lost confidence in such movements (trade unions)', but that since the A.A.M. had begun their agitation there 'they had a more cheerful prospect.... As far as he could see there was a prospect of thousands joining the union'.<sup>54</sup> Over the following few months the A.A.M. strengthened its hold over the district, and the Union's next conference was held in Hanley, in October 1870. It was agreed at this conference that the sum of £100 be lent to the district by the A.A.M. executive on the security of five district officials.<sup>55</sup> In May 1871, at the Manchester conference of the A.A.M., the North Staffordshire miners were represented by four members of the Burslem lodge who reported that two thousand five hundred miners had joined the union over the past year or so, forming twenty seven or twenty eight lodges in the district, despite some difficulties caused by the local coal employers' objections to engineers joining the Association.<sup>56</sup> In April 1871 a demonstration of North Staffordshire Miners was addressed

53. Potteries Examiner 3 December 1871

54. *ibid.* 22 April 1870.

55. *ibid.* 15 October 1870.

56. *ibid.* 5 May 1871.

by William Brown, vice President of the A.A.M. and agent for North Staffordshire, Thomas Halliday, President of the A.A.M., Alexander MacDonald, President of the Miners National Association,, J.Sambrook, Present of the North Staffordshire district of the A.A.M. and William Owen, editor of the Potteries Examiner.<sup>57</sup> At this meeting the four principal grievances of the North Staffordshire miners were outlined, namely the butty system - formally opposed at the meeting by a 'local butty' - low wages, long working hours and the critical weaknesses of the Mines Regulation Act.

The A.A.M. grew rapidly throughout 1871 and 1872. In May 1871, William Owen introduced A. MacDonald and W.Brown to eight hundred miners at Alsager's Bank, and to one thousand five hundred miners at Goldenhill.<sup>58</sup> Before long the fruits of successful union organisation could be seen clearly by the miners of North Staffordshire. In February 1872, for example, miners in Longton worked seven hours a week less than they worked previous to 1870, and the wages of colliers in many parts of North Staffordshire were again increased by 10 per cent in March 1873.<sup>59</sup> In North Staffordshire, therefore, the miners did not sacrifice higher wages in favour of achieving shorter hours of work,<sup>60</sup> but, during the great labour unrest of the early 1870's, won both. The spectacular growth of the A.A.M. throughout the North Staffordshire coalfield and elsewhere is therefore a significant characteristic of the economic boom of the early 1870's, and of the nature of industrial relations which accompanied it.

Whereas in the three towns of Newcastle under Lyme, Wolstanton and Stoke on Trent there were slightly under ten thousand potters and nearly six thousand coal miners, there were also nearly seven hundred miners and nearly two thousand persons employed in the manufacture of iron.<sup>61</sup> These

57. Potteries Examiner 14 April 1871.

58. *ibid.* 19 May 1871.

59. Minutes of meeting of Directors of the Ivy House and Northwood Colliery Co. Ltd., 10 April 1873, Lee Crowder MSS 211; Potteries Examiner 10 February, 1873.

60. As suggested by the Select Committee on the Present Dearthness and Scarcity of Coals, 1873, Report, pxi. Also B.MacCormick, J.E.Williams, 'The Miners and the Eight Hour Day', Economic History Review, Vol.2 No.12, 1959.

61. Census of England and Wales 1861.

industries, and the industrial workers of North Staffordshire, however, were dominated by the earthen ware manufacturers and the coal miners.

### South Staffordshire.

Coal mining in South Staffordshire was centred on three major coal producing areas. The first lay south of a line drawn from West Bromwich through Tipton to the Western boundary fault near Sedgley (The Sedgley-Rowley ridge); the second lay in the central region, its northern boundary running from West Bromwich through Wednesbury skirting the southern edge of Wolverhampton, and the third sector of the coalfield was bounded by a line joining Rushall, and Bloxwich, and to the west by the boundary fault at Wednesfield heath. The industry was based on a thick coal seam, but it also exploited thin seams of brooch, heathen and new mine coal, fireclay and bottom coal. By the early 1860's coal was being raised from almost every part of South Staffordshire and North Worcestershire which lay on the exposed coal measures to the South of the Bentley fault, and by that time three hundred collieries had been established in the North Eastern Section and one hundred and fifteen in the South Western. During the early 1870's the relative importance of the North Eastern sector began to decline, whilst the South Western field continued to expand.<sup>62</sup> The miners formed the largest group within the workforce of South Staffordshire, at least until the coalfield began to decline in the 1870's. Wage rates were roughly similar in all the pits in the district; in 1871 they stood at five shillings a day, and reached a peak of five shillings and sixpence a day in 1873 before plunging down to a mere two shillings and ninepence a day in 1879.<sup>63</sup> The vast majority of colliers

61. Census of England and Wales 1861.

62. I am indebted to E. Taylor, 'The Working Class Movement in the Black Country 1863 - 1914, University of Keele unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 1974, for much of the above and subsequent material on Black Country industries, labour processes and trade unionism.

63. G.J. Barnsby, 'The Standard of Living in the Black Country during the Nineteenth Century', Economic History Review, XXIV (1871) pp-223-238: also Miners' Association, 'Miners Wages for the Past Forty Five Years! (1909), Staffordshire R.O. 570/38.

worked on day rates, normally working single shifts per day.

The coal miners of South Staffordshire and the Black Country had some previous experience of trade unionism. In 1864, they had rebelled against Alexander MacDonald's Miners' National Association due to its refusal to support striking miners in the district in that year. They subsequently took a leading part in forming the breakaway Practical Miners' Association. This union collapsed within two years of its foundation, but many miners in the South Staffordshire area remained wary of any further alliances with miners from other districts. This suspicion of large trade unions was allayed, albeit temporarily, during the unrest of the early 1870's.

As was the case in North Staffordshire, the revival of miners' trade unionism in this period in South Staffordshire, particularly in the North Eastern sector of the coalfield, was led by the A.A.M. The expanding South Western sector, however, reaffiliated to the National Association in 1873. Such 'differences in temper'<sup>64</sup> between North Eastern and South Western areas of the South Staffordshire Coalfield were to have serious consequences for miners' solidarity in wage and conditions struggles during the mid-1870's. South Staffordshire miners were organised initially by recruiting agents sent by the executive of the A.A.M. from North Staffordshire, including Sambrooke, president of the North Staffordshire District A.A.M. and William Brown, vice President of the union. In September 1871 a lodge of the North Staffordshire District was established in Darlaston, and was followed by a second lodge in Willenhall in December 1871. In 1872 miners from West Bromwich tentatively established links with the A.A.M., but remained very wary of the new organisation. Indeed E. Taylor has argued that 'at every stage in the wages and hours movement, the initiative was taken by the associations west of Dudley'<sup>65</sup> The A.A.M., however, became the catalyst for important improvements in the working lives of the South Staffordshire

64. E. Taylor, op.cit. p.5.

65. *ibid*, p.138

miners, for the eighteen months leading up to May 1873, the miners, through their union, had secured an eight hour day and wage increases of forty per cent.

By April 1872 the small lodges of the North Staffordshire District in the Black Country had grown into three separate districts, the South Staffordshire District, among whose leaders were George Carter, Charles Gething, and R. Cotterell, the West Bromwich and Oldbury District, led by Alfred Randle and Thomas Griffiths, and the Cannock Chase District, represented by George Pickard and George Howell. By October 1872 these Districts had recruited 5,796, 3,195 and 2,176 members respectively.<sup>66</sup> A Tamworth District had also been formed with 93 members<sup>67</sup>. The A.A.M. led a concerted effort to unionise the traditionally suspicious miners of the county, bringing their most influential and important leaders and supporters into the area to help with the campaign. In June 1873, for example, a five or six thousand strong demonstration of South Staffordshire miners at Walsall was addressed by Thomas Halliday, William Brown, Lloyd Jones of the London Trades Council, Henry Mitchard, A.A.M. agent for the new South Wales District, T. Griffiths of the West Bromwich miners, G. Gething South Staffordshire District agent and its secretary R. Cotterell, and William Owen, editor of the Potteries Examiner.<sup>68</sup>

The butty system of subcontracting labour was almost universal in the industries of South Staffordshire. It operated in the collieries, and it was the basis for the organisation of labour in the ironworks.<sup>69</sup> The Finished Iron trade in the Black Country employed 21,000 workers in 1862, the typical unit of production being 250 men and youths. The production processes were carried out by 'forehands' or subcontractors hired by the ironmaster and often supervised by works managers. The forehands were

66. Wigan Observer 5 Oct. 1872.

67. ibid. 5 Oct. 1872.

68. Potteries Examiner 7 Jan. 1873.

69. J.F. Ede, History of Wednesbury. (1962 Wednesbury), p.245.

paid on a piecerate basis, but they remunerated their assistants, or underhands, with day wages. According to Eric Taylor 'the subcontractors were the key figures in the trade and production could not be maintained without them'.<sup>70</sup> Subcontracted ironworkers were divided into a number of different functional groups. The first, the puddlers, worked in small groups with one forehand, two underhands and one youth. This team refined the pig iron by stirring out the carbon impurities with an iron bar introduced through a hole in the furnace door. The shinglers then hammered the puddled iron out into shapes required by the mills. Thereafter the iron was converted into sheets, plates rods and bars by Rollers, millmen and furnacemen, each employing a large team of ten to twenty men and youths. These latter three groups of millworkers regarded themselves as the 'aristocracy of the trade',<sup>71</sup> and caused much friction between themselves and the puddlers. Since they were entirely dependent upon the preparatory work of the puddlers, millmen seldom supported puddlers in their conflicts with employers. There were also wide variations in skilled ironworkers' wage rates. The strict divisions between contractors and underhands and the further divisions which existed between the various skilled trades themselves, rendered the development of effective trade unionism very difficult amongst the ironworkers. Subcontracted workers alone could exert effective industrial power, and unionism was largely, in some cases exclusively, confined to subcontractors. Among these, the puddlers were often the most militant, being the most vulnerable at times of slack trade and strikes. They were also the lowest paid. By 1871 John Kane's Amalgamated Ironworkers Association had gained little ground in South Staffordshire, where the ironworkers, often as suspicious of external organisations as were the coal miners, were not anxious to send their funds to distant executives in the North East. In the economic boom of the early 1870's, however, the union succeeded in

70. E.Taylor, op.cit, p.90.

71. ibid. p.41.

recruiting many ironworkers from the district, and by July 1872 membership in South Staffordshire stood at 7,160.<sup>72</sup> Many of the wage advances won during the early 1870's, however, were due as much to the shrewdness of union negotiators of the South Staffordshire Iron Trade Arbitration and Conciliation Board, established in 1872, as to strong union organisation among the ironworkers themselves. Like the A.A.M., John Kane's Ironworkers Union was based on the principle of 'Centralization and Unity',<sup>73</sup> but it was soon made apparent that despite the initial enthusiasm for trade unionism, ironworkers in Staffordshire and other outlying districts did not much favour the centralisation of funds<sup>74</sup>, and before long that mood of dissatisfaction with the activities of an Executive Committee based in the North East of England began to be felt in South Staffordshire as elsewhere. Membership of the union declined sharply from thirty five thousand in 1873 to only ten thousand in 1876, and the few members who remained in South Staffordshire proposed that district executives be established 'with district local powers and a district command of its funds'.<sup>75</sup> Such schemes floundered following the death of John Kane in 1876 and the coming depression in the late 1870's, a depression which was 'markedly more severe' in the Black Country than elsewhere.<sup>76</sup>

During the early 1860's a variety of metal using trades were developed in South Staffordshire. Units of production in these industries were usually small, most being well under forty workers. Much of the production was of a domestic nature, and between twenty five and thirty per cent of both lock making and nut and bolt making, and virtually all nailmaking were carried out on such an outwork basis. It is interesting and significant that many local coal miners were brought up with a knowledge

72. ibid. p.41.

73. Wigan Observer 5 May 1871.

74. Radical Times 9 December 1876.

75. Wednesbury Examiner 23 December 1876.

76. E.Taylor, op.cit., p.13; G.J.Barnsby, op.cit., p.220.



of the skills required by these trades. Consequently, they were able to return to these trades with relative ease during times of strikes and unemployment, indeed, the 'nail trade was especially subject to "flooding" by casual labour of this kind'.<sup>77</sup> This prevailing situation placed employers in a very powerful position in the course of bargaining with their workers, and the outwork and domestic nature of many of these trades encouraged the employment of a high proportion of women workers. Trade and employment in South Staffordshire was poised on a delicate balance, and the cyclical nature of the finished iron trade and the irregularity of work in outwork trades created what Taylor has termed

'a high degree of resource mobility, transmitting competition and cyclical fluctuations from one section of the metal trades to another as producers increased the production of some lines to offset the fall in demand from others'.<sup>78</sup>

The labour supply in South Staffordshire, particularly in the metal using trades, was of necessity highly elastic, a factor which tended to render unionism difficult to organise.

Nailmaking in South Staffordshire and North Worcestershire was in an advanced state of decline by the 1860's. The introduction of machinery into the trade had halved the number of nailmakers between 1830 and 1866. In 1871, however, there were still nearly nine thousand nailmakers in Worcestershire, the majority being women.<sup>79</sup> The pressure on wages which followed in the wake of mechanisation drove the bulk of the trade into the smaller towns and villages west of Dudley. Some house nailers earned up to twenty five shillings per week, but most of the workers in the trade earned only between twelve and sixteen shillings per week and only six to eight shillings per week for women. Nominally wages were based on a wages list, and disputes often centred on adjustments to this list. The

77. E. Taylor, op.cit., p.241.

78. ibid., p.245.

79. Census of England and Wales, 1861.

nail-makers developed trade organisations initially out of an unofficial movement led in the first instance by a Halesowen man, John Price. A short lived Nail Forgers Friendly Society was formed in 1869, and in 1870 an Amalgamated Nailmakers Society was established. In 1874 the East Worcestershire and South Staffordshire Thousand Nailmakers Association was formed to fight a single wage agitation in the autumn of that year, and like in many other trades and industries in South Staffordshire, workers employed in nailmaking won wage advances of between forty and fifty per cent over the three years ending in 1874. They did not, however, succeed in forming a strong and permanent trade society.

In sharp contrast, the flint glass makers of South Staffordshire established and maintained an extremely powerful trade society. Flint glass makers worked in foundries in teams, or 'chairs', of four - the workman (maker), servitor (assistant), footmaker (blower) and taker-in (apprentice). The production of flint glass was a continuous process, whose skills and careful co-ordination prevented 'flooding' by casual labour and safeguarded the bargaining power of workers vis a vis their employers. Furthermore, flint glass making was immune to the cyclical fluctuations and depressions of the metal using trades to a very large extent. By the early 1860's, they had developed two prosperous and strong trade unions. The Flint Glass Cutters Union, formed in 1844, survived a protracted strike over the issue of apprenticeship in 1866, and the Flint Glass Makers' Union, founded in Stourbridge in 1851 was, by 1869, among the wealthiest trade associations in Britain with regard to funds per member, consisting of assets worth nearly six pounds per member. By the late 1860's the latter union still maintained considerable control over entry into the flint glass trade. However, like the miners and the ironworkers organisations, both these unions were severely undermined by the depression of the mid and late 1870's.

A third craft of importance in South Staffordshire was the nut and bolt trade. Developed as a separate trade in the 1840's as a consequence

of the growth of railway construction and general engineering, the trade was, by the early 1870's, centred in Birmingham, Smethwick, Blackheath, West Bromwich, Dudley, Bilston, Wolverhampton and Darlaston. At the start of the decade over eight thousand men and boys were engaged in the trade. The 1867 Workshop Act and the Factory Acts, however, brought small workshops in the area under the control of the Factory Inspectors for the first time. As a result, boy labour began to be legally restricted. In a time of expansion, this restricted the wage prospects of many nut and bolt forgers who, in addition to losing a number of boys, were forced to pay a shilling for the medical certificate of young workers in his employ to the management.

Angered by these legal infringements which, they believed, were being exploited by the masters,, two hundred nut and bolt makers, with little experience of previous trade union organisation, met at the Temperance Hall, Darlaston, in August 1870. The meeting was addressed by a twenty eight year old nut and bolt maker, Richard Juggins, who had been employed in the trade since the age of eight. Juggins and the amassed nut and bolt makers resolved to give the masters fourteen days notice of court action against the illegal deduction of one shilling for medical certificates, and cited the 1867 Act, which postulated that contracted labourers ought not to pay more than threepence of the cost of the certificate, in their defence. A test case proved inconclusive, and out of the confusion and the recriminations the Nut and Bolt Forgers Protection Society was formed, consisting only of hand forgers. Juggins was appointed General Secretary. In January 1871 a second branch of the Association was opened in Smethwick, and in May 1872 the union was powerful enough to pay Juggins a full-time salary. The following year Juggins established branches of the union in Sheffield, and a year later, in Manchester. Furthermore, in 1873, and on the initiative of Richard Juggins and the Nut and Bolt Forgers union, a Midland Counties Trades Federation was formed in the Black Country, which in addition to Juggins' union included also the Cradley Heath Chain Makers Association,

the Dudley Anvil and Vice Makers, the Bloxwich Awl Blade Makers Society and the Wolverhampton Fireiron Makers Association.<sup>80</sup>

In conclusion, therefore, the fortunes of the different working class occupational groups in South Staffordshire varied enormously. There were widely varying wage rates among the two largest sections, the miners and the ironworkers, although wage rates for engineers and labourers remained static and uniform throughout the period. Building workers alone secured continual pay rises, and for domestic outworkers the 1860's and the 1870's were years of high fluctuations and often long periods of starvation wage levels. Trade union organisations exhibited a similarly patchy and unstable pattern of development and decline in the region.

Shropshire, Derbyshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire.

The South Staffordshire and North Worcestershire industrial belt, the Black Country, was flanked to its East, West, and South, by largely agricultural districts and counties. Shropshire, once the crucible from which many of the major developments of the Industrial Revolution in Britain emerged was, by the early 1870's, a predominantly agrarian county. Over fourteen thousand males were engaged in agricultural labouring, whilst only three and a half thousand males were employed in coal mines and a slightly smaller figure in ironworking. In Derbyshire, however, nearly thirteen thousand males were employed in coal mining, over a thousand iron workers and more than five thousand agricultural workers. Gloucestershire, particularly the southern districts, was quite heavily industrialised. The economy of the Forest of Dean was linked very closely to those of Staffordshire and South Wales. Nearly a third of the Forest's coal output was consumed by manufacturing industry within the area, which then sold goods, principally pig iron and tinplate, to South Wales and Staffordshire for processing. The remaining coal was sold on the seasonal housecoal market. As a result, the price of coal, levels of output, demand for labour and therefore miners' wages

80. J.A.C.Baker, 'Richard Juggins and Black Country Unionism in the late Nineteenth Century', Lichfield and South Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society Transactions., 1965-6, (Kendal, 1967), p.67.

tended on the whole to rise in autumn and to fall again in spring.<sup>81</sup> As in Staffordshire, the butty system was prevalent among the miners of the Forest of Dean, although many miners worked directly for mine owners on day rates.<sup>82</sup>

The Dean miners began to participate in the labour unrest of the early 1870's by forming an unofficial 'Miners' Committee' in Cinderford during a dispute there in 1870. In September this nascent 'union club' led a successful strike for higher wages and the appointment of a check-weighman at the Parkend collieries. Following this victory, and upon the prompting of northern A.A.M. agents, the Forest of Dean 'miners' Club' became a district of the A.A.M., and the union spread rapidly through the Forest of Dean throughout the following two or three years. By 1872 there were twenty union lodges in the Forest of Dean, and financial membership in the district rose from three thousand in April 1872 to four thousand in April 1874.<sup>83</sup> The A.A.M. was of seminal importance in the organisation of other workers in the Forest, including mechanics, enginemen, ironworkers and agricultural labourers.<sup>84</sup>

Bristol, with an over twenty year old population of over a hundred thousand, was the largest town in Gloucestershire and remained an important sea port. However, only six of the Bristol trades employed more than a thousand workers in 1871, namely merchant seamen, carpenters, masons, plumbers, boot and shoe makers and general labourers. The latter two were the largest with two thousand two hundred and thirty seven and four thousand five hundred and ninety eight workers respectively. A distinctive characteristic of the Bristol workforce was the high proportion of women in its ranks. In 1871, thirty six per cent of the industrial workforce were women, a sum which does not include the over nine thousand women employed in various forms of domestic service.

81. C.Fisher and J.Smethurst, 'War on the Law of Supply and Demand', in R. Harrison (Ed.), Independent Collier (1978), p.126; C.H.Fisher, 'Free Miners and Colliers : Custom, the Crown and Trade Unionism in the Forest of Dean 1788-1886', Univ. of Warwick Ph.D., 1978.

82. C.Fisher, J.Smethurst op.cit. p.127.

83. *ibid.* p.127.

84. *ibid.* *ibid.*

There were six thousand two hundred and forty three hatters, tailloresses, milliners, seamstresses and stay makers, two thousand one hundred and seventy two laundry keepers, five hundred and nine boot and shoe makers, four hundred and nine weavers, textile factory workers, drapers, fancy goods manufacturers, trimming makers, embroiderers and crape manufacturers and three hundred and twenty five manufacturers of cloth, wool worsted and tape.<sup>85</sup>

The various skilled trades of Bristol were organised into the Bristol Trades Council under the Presidency of T.Cawsay, a journeyman tailor.<sup>86</sup> However, early in 1873 the town's general workers were organised into an unskilled labourers trade union, the Bristol, West of England and South Wales General Amalgamated Labourers' Union, which was later affiliated to the Federal Union of Agricultural Labourers. This organisation did not consist wholly of farm labourers, however, and in 1874 its members included builders' labourers, deal and timber porters, sugar refiners, barge and trow men, quay porters and warehousemen, operative tanners, gasworks men, soap and charcoalworks men, corn porters, factory operatives, cocoa manufacturers, iron foundry men, dock hobblers, iron ore and ironworks labourers, quarrymen, foundry labourers agricultural and other general labourers.<sup>87</sup> Organised into three districts, Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter, the union extended from the south coast of Devon through Clevedon and Weston Supermare, northwards to Bathford and Gloucester and westwards to Newport, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil and Dowlais.

In Bristol the history of general labourers, skilled artisans and women workers are closely related, and the issues which working women raised in their efforts to organise were to force themselves on to the concerns and the field of interest of the editors of labour newspapers. Their cause was

85. Census of England and Wales 1871.

86. Shropshire Examiner 7 November 1874.

87. *ibid.* 18 July 1874.

sometimes taken up with enthusiasm, at other times with concern and apprehension, always with a certain confusion concerning the ultimate goals of women's organisation.

Amongst the most outspoken of these disaffected groups of women workers in Bristol were the textile operatives, who, during the early months of 1874 began to complain bitterly of their low wages and harsh working conditions. In the cotton factories, for example, wages had fallen by twenty four per cent between 1867 and 1874 to only nine or ten shillings per week for two-loom weavers, and one pound one shilling per week for four-loom weavers. The employment of helpers on the looms further decreased the real value of weavers' earnings. Furthermore, to exacerbate matters, employers extracted from these declining wages numerous fees and fines. One example, which was the cause of particular resentment among cotton operatives, was the payment of threepence out of the fourpenny cost of the so-called 'Gold Bobbins' used in the weaving process. In similar factories in Lancashire, it was commonly believed that such bobbins were provided without cost by the employers. One factory worker remarked that in her factory the cost of these bobbins could subtract up to two shillings and eightpence per week from her earnings. In addition to the 'Gold Bobbins' fee, operatives were expected to pay twopence per week for each loom in the factory for the services of a doctor and a further one penny per fortnight for the use of water closets. Fines were also frequent and harsh: lateness for work was punished by the loss of twopence for five minutes and fourpence for half an hour. Broken windows were also charged heavily for. The normal hours of labour, in accordance with the Factory Acts, were on weekdays from six to six, with an hour and a half for meals, and on Saturdays until two o'clock in the afternoon. The arduous tasks of cleaning machinery, however, ensured that the actual period worked in the factories was often very much longer than that which the statutory limit allowed.<sup>89</sup>

88. Compare with the grievance of nut and bolt makers in the Black Country, p.2.

89. South Staffordshire Examiner 18 July 1874.

During 1874 the growing sense of resentment amongst women cotton workers provided the impetus for an early attempt at industrial organisation.

In July 1874 J. Fox, General Secretary of the Bristol, West of England and South Wales General Amalgamated Labourers' Union, organised the union's third half yearly conference at Bristol. The conference was presided over by John Thomas Morgan, editor of working class newspapers in Merthyr Tydfil. On the second day of the conference, a group of women cotton workers, referred to as the Bristol Female Factory Operatives, presented the delegates with a petition requesting membership of the union. The petition was signed by seventy three Female Operatives. This petition was greeted by three distinct responses. The first proposed that the Executive Council of the union should take immediate steps to open 'distinct and separate lodges for the admission of female factory operatives in general' into the union. In opposition to this resolution another delegate proposed a rejectionist policy - that 'the time has not arrived to connect female factory operatives' with the association - but found no seconder. A third course was then suggested to the effect, that 'the Executive Council be requested to assist the female operatives in organising, but that they have a distinct Union from our Association'. Finally, this latter amendment was carried by thirty of the thirty one delegates present at the Conference.<sup>90</sup> The debate which preceded this decision acknowledged the tensions which existed between men and women workers in Bristol at this time. T. Cawsey, President of the Trades Council, had been chosen by the Female Factory Operatives as their representative in order to gain admission to the union's conference. Cawsey nonetheless argued vigorously in favour of the final amendment on the grounds that, whilst the request of such a large group of women workers could not simply be ignored and rejected, the problem of 'female labour superseding manual labour' was a very acute one, and that consequently the incorporation of women into the union would serve only to 'acknowledge

90. *ibid.* 18 July 1874.



their right to compete' with men on a permanent basis. Having been placed in a position of some difficulty by the women's petition, the pressure on men's occupations exerted by women workers, and the fear and sense of insecurity which was thus generated, male unskilled workers, as well as among other representatives of the Bristol trades, finally decided that as women could not be ignored, neither could they be admitted into the male unions. The women workers of Bristol were made aware of the fact that the existing institutions of labour stood full square in opposition to the incorporation of women into their ranks. The subsequent formation and growth of a union for working women in Bristol must therefore be seen within the context of this institutionalised hostility, and of the deep tensions within the labour market itself which underlay it. Labour newspapers on the whole attempted to mediate this hostility, but not to undermine the privileges of male trade unionism which perpetuated that hostility and the policy of excluding women from their trade unions.

Following the refusal of the Bristol, West of England and South Wales General Amalgamated Labourers' Union to admit the Bristol Female Factory Operatives, and the subsequent decision to assist their separate organisation,, the Bristol Trades Council called for a conference of all Bristol women workers to be held on 3 August 1874. At this conference Cawsey further developed his attitude towards the unionisation of women, and in a speech on 'the great question of female oppression',<sup>91</sup> he again defended the exclusionist policy of building separate women's unions. Cawsay's argument was that there were too many women industrialist workers in Bristol, and that many of these underpaid women were encroaching on the preserves of male craft labour, such as tailoring, Cawsey's own trade, as well as on to areas of less skilled work. Incorporation of women into the existing trade unions would appear to legitimise this competition, and on those grounds was to be resolutely opposed. There were, however, certain

91. *ibid.* 8 August 1874.

types of work which were deemed 'suitable and proper' for women to perform, and which comprised no threat to 'male' occupations, a conviction shared also by the potters of North Staffordshire at the time. This kind of women's work - domestic service, laundry keeping and so on - Cawsey argued provided the most fertile ground for separate women's trade unionism. For Cawsey, the Bristol Trades Council and many other male workers throughout the region from North Staffordshire to South Wales, the function of women's trade unionism in general was two-fold. Firstly, by enabling women to agitate for higher wages, shorter hours and better conditions of work, unionism would reduce the impact of lower paid women's work on 'male' occupations. This short term aim, however, could not be striven for within the existing male trade unions since their long term objective was not to integrate women fully into the labour force, but rather to assist in squeezing women workers out of these sectors of the labour market designated 'male', eventually with a view to bringing to an end the 'unwholesome competition of female labour'.<sup>92</sup> Ultimately, therefore, women's trade unionism would 'free' women from all manual labour, and enable them to attend to what Cawsey considered to be their 'prime duty', raising children and providing the domestic focus to the working family. From the point of view of the Bristol Trades Council, therefore, female trade unionism would help to rationalise and regulate the previously uncontrolled influx of women workers into the city's job market.

The conference was predominantly male and middle class in competition, but it resolved to inaugurate a new national women's trade union, the National Union of Working Women, (N.U.W.W.). Emma Paterson was also in attendance, but admitted to being there more as 'a listener than a speaker',<sup>93</sup> and her only contribution was a brief report on the metropolitan activity of the newly established National Protective and Benefit Union of Working Women

92. *ibid.* 8 August 1874.

93. P.Hollis, Women in Public : The Women's Movement 1850-1900; (1979 p.11.

(later known as the Women's Protective and Provident League).<sup>94</sup> In the twelve months following the formation of the N.U.W.W. in Bristol in August 1874 the union underwent relatively rapid growth, and extended its field of influence far beyond the trades of Bristol. As early as 14 October 1874 it had been resolved by the ruling committee to send H.M.Hunt to visit Kidderminster in the wake of the carpet weavers' dispute 'for the purposes of ascertaining the causes of the dispute, and to impress upon the women the necessity of combining for the protection of their labour'.<sup>95</sup> As a result of this visit a branch of the N.U.W.W. was formed in Kidderminster in December 1874. By the same time two strong tailoress branches of the union had been established in Bristol.<sup>96</sup> In the same month the union was extended to Stafford, where a branch was formed among women of the local shoe trade,<sup>97</sup> and to the Shropshire coalfield where, under the leadership of H.M.Hunt and Martin Cooper, miner s' agent, women employed in the blast furnaces and the pit banks were recruited into the union. Many members of the A.A.M. also attended these recruiting meetings in order 'to show their sympathy with the movement'.<sup>98</sup> In the same month negotiations were also in progress for the incorporation of the female cotton factory operatives of Bristol, already organised into a sectional union, into the N.U.W.W.<sup>99</sup>

#### South Wales and Monmouthshire.

In South Wales as in Staffordshire and Gloucestershire basic industries were intimately related bound by an extremely sensitive interplay of labour, transportation and markets. This industrial interdependence had repercussions on the ways in which workers organised, which trade unions they joined and the power, economic, political and cultural, which those

95. Tamworth Miner's Examiner 41 October 1874.

96. Shropshire Examiner 12 December 1874.

97. *ibid.* 5 December 1874.

98. *ibid.* 5 December 1874.

99. *ibid.* 12 December 1874.

unions enjoyed. It also ensured that workers in Wales faced different problems in different ways to their eastern and northern compatriots. However, following the pattern adopted in the above regional studies, and for the sake of analytical brevity, the industrial unit of South Wales and Monmouthshire will be divided into its five major components; Iron, Tinsplate, Coal and ancilliary skilled and unskilled trades and occupations.

The Welsh ironworkers of the early 1870's were already heirs to a long and bitter history. On the 14 March 1817, Major General James Willoughby-Gordon, writing confidentially to Viscount Sidmouth, remarked of Merthyr and its ironworkers that

'This place certainly gives the tone to the whole iron country, and I am fully convinced that your lordship cannot keep too vigilant an eye upon it. Their numbers are formidable, and they have no other principle of action than what proceeds from their wants. In a moment of distress...they have the power (unless curbed by the presence of some force and by the apprehension of more) of doing the most extensive mischief, both private and national, in a very short time...'<sup>100</sup>

The Major-General shrewdly appreciated the fickleness of Merthyr's 'secret people', and although the intervening half century was to bring some social stability to the iron country, the ironmasters were wise to remember Willoughby-Gordon's sense of anxiety. For mid-century expansion brought its own industrial and labour problems, its own hardening of attitudes and a resurgence of unrest which was in no way confined to the old iron town of Merthyr Tydfil.

In 1871 Merthyr Tydfil's local Board returned a population figure of

100. A. Aspinall, The Early English Trade Unions: Documents from the Home Office Papers in the Public Record Office (1949), p.231.

fifty one thousand, nine hundred and forty nine.<sup>101</sup> The town was, in many respects, as cosmopolitan<sup>91</sup> as it had been during the stormy 'frontier' years of the 1820's and 1830's.<sup>102</sup> This old centre of ironstone mining and iron production was, during the 1860's feeling the shock waves of large-scale coal exploitation, and the new seams of the Aberdare and the Rhondda Valleys sucked in a new generation of industrial workers. In 1871, ten and a half per cent of Merthyr's population had been born outside Glamorgan, and of the nine and a half thousand Irish immigrants in Glamorgan in that year, over thirty six per cent lived in Merthyr.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, B. Thomas estimates that between 1871 and 1881, three and a half times the number of the previous decade immigrated into Glamorgan, half of whom were natives of non border counties.<sup>104</sup>

Three thousand, three hundred and fifteen Merthyr men worked in iron manufacture in 1871, and another three thousand and seventy three in the raising of coal. If iron mining and general labouring is included, then fifty seven and a half per cent of the adult male population were engaged in this group of industries. One thousand, one hundred and four Merthyr women, eight and a half per cent of all adult women, worked in domestic service, the largest sector of women's employment in the town. A further seven hundred and fifty men worked in the building trade, and four hundred and eighty eight in transport, both industrial and general. When other manual trades are included, such as servants, agricultural labourers, machine makers, gas service makers, stone quarriers, brickmakers, road labourers, tinmen, blacksmiths and 'artisans', the number of manual workers leaps up to eleven thousand, six hundred and sixteen, or seventy nine point three per cent of the total adult male population.<sup>105</sup>

101. Census of England and Wales 1871.

102. G.A.Williams, The Merthyr Rising (1978), cf Chapter 1.

103. Census of England and Wales 1871. Birthplaces of Inhabitants.

104. B.Thomas, The Migration of Labour into the Glamorganshire Coalfield 1861-1911, in Minchington W.E. (Ed.) Industrial South Wales 1750-1914, (1969).

105. Census of England and Wales 1871. Occupations.

Iron was the first Welsh industrial giant to accumulate a substantial body of wage labourers. After a slow growth through the Eighteenth Century, the arrival of the first generation of pioneer entrepreneurs during the 1770's and the 1780's marked the beginning of the age of serious metallurgical exploitation. John Guest of Dowlais, Richard Crawshay of Cyfartha and Samuel Homfray of Penydarren became the potentates whose iron empires were to dominate industrial South Wales until the 1880's. During the 1850's, however, their hitherto undisputed economic prominence began to be eroded by competition from the ironfounders of the Clyde and Middlesborough areas. Evidence suggests that a number of skilled ironworkers moved north, drawn by their offers of higher wages. Wages in Wales in the 1860's were said to be 'notoriously lower than those of Staffordshire or the North East'.<sup>106</sup> Partially in response to this northern competition in iron working, the iron founders of South Wales decided to specialize in that group of commodities dependent on on iron bar. Consequently the existing works at Abercarn, Ebbw Vale, Nantyglo, Rhymney, Blaenavon, Ystalyfera, Brynman and Pontyberen (the latter three in the Western anthracite belt), were extended, and new iron works were opened at Abernant, Aberdare, Neath and Swansea.

Qualitative changes were also taking place in the iron industry. Bessemer, perfecting much of his process at Dowlais, discovered a method whereby as much steel could be produced in fifteen minutes as could in twenty four hours using the older method of puddling. As a result the price of iron slumped during the following twenty years. Later discoveries, notably those of Siemens Martin at Swansea in 1867 and Gilchrist Thomas at Cwmafon, Blaenavon and Dowlais revolutionised iron production methods. Improved technology, however, imperilled the older inland iron centres, particularly as local ore became exhausted and works became increasingly dependent on better quality imported ore. The interplay of these conditions made for both expansion and recession, and production after the mid 1870's was never

106. D. Burn, The Economic History of Steelmaking, (1961), p.15.

to resume its old pattern of geography and distribution. The early 1870's, therefore, were critically important years for the iron industry in South Wales, and the struggles of the ironworkers of Merthyr and Dowlais in particular, the traditional heartlands of iron production, were to be decisive ones.

The boom in the iron industry which began in 1866-7 and culminated in 1872-3 was stimulated by a huge international demand for cheap iron, principally for the making of railways in the United States of America, Latin America, Eastern Europe and Russia. The production of pig iron soared. Nevertheless, the collapse of this market, South Wales' staple iron product, sounded the tocsin for the industry as a whole. The magnitude of the demand had stimulated large scale investment, much of which was subsequently lost as buyers from the developing countries defaulted on their debts. In 1873 the Cyfarthfa works closed, after being 'maintained in vigorous condition'<sup>107</sup> from 1867 until 1873.

'One unpleasant incident of Mr. Crawshay's career', Charles Wilkins related with reference to the closure of Cyfarthfa 'was the stoppage of the works brought about by trade unionism. Times too', he assures his readers 'were bad...'<sup>108</sup>. The trade union to which Wilkins alluded was indeed a power amongst the ironworkers in 1873. Reaching South Wales in 1869 or 1870, John Kane's National Amalgamated Malleable Ironworkers Association of Great Britain, the union grew at great speed from 1871. Membership in South Wales leapt from one thousand eight hundred in 1872<sup>109</sup> to over fifteen thousand, five hundred members and one hundred and ten branches in 1873.<sup>110</sup> Nationally the union doubled in size from over fifteen thousand<sup>111</sup> to thirty five thousand<sup>112</sup> in the same twelve month period.

107. C.Wilkins, The History of the Iron, Steel, Tinplate and other trades of Wales, (Merthyr Tydfil 1903), p. 315.

108. ibid. p.316.

109. Workman's Advocate 27 September 1873.

110. J.Bellamy and J. Saville, Dictionary of Labour Biography, 3, p.122.

111. Workman's Advocate 27 September 1873.

112. V.I.Allen, The Sociology of Industrial Relations, (1971), p.142.

South Wales was therefore amongst the Union's largest and fastest growing districts. By 1872 the Union maintained two Welsh speaking agents in the district, G.G.Thomas and Phillip Harries.

The story of the ironworkers, however, is complicated by the development of tinplate making in South Wales. The tinplate industry was initially stimulated by the remarkable, if temporary, boom in iron, but was soon to overtake iron as the most important metallurgical industry in South West Wales. Production of tinplate increased rapidly between 1865 and 1871, and was closely followed by a similar increase in volume of exports. From 1871, however, the rate of growth slackened, and from 1873 prices showed a marked downward tendency. The major determining factor in pricing tinplate was not competition, and Britain's monopoly position enabled manufacturers to determine their prices with merchants at quarterly meetings.<sup>113</sup> Demand during this period was relatively inelastic and the upward movement of prices did not alter sales to any significant extent. Enormous profits were made but the systematic overinvestment of capital in the tinplate industry serves as one explanation for the steadying of the rate of growth after 1872. Unlike iron, however, tinplate did not 'nosedive' into a 'Great Depression'. The nature of the product, a light disposable coating, which unlike the heavy durables of the Midlands, found a ready market in the expanding consumer industry - food and petrol canning, cheap tins, furniture and ornaments, particularly in the U.S.A. - was the secret of its continuing demand and success.

Tinplate making during this period was a predominantly Welsh industry. Of thirty five factories in 1850, twenty two were in Glamorgan-shire, Carmarthenshire and Monmouthshire. By 1875 forty two more had been built, of which thirty five were in these three counties, representing an important shift away from the traditional tin centres of Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire.<sup>114</sup> In total, of the sixty two tinplate

113. J.H.Jones, The Tinplate Industry, (1914), p.23.

114. J.H.Jones op.cit., p.25.



works opened between 1860 and 1896 in the U.K., fifty were in the industrial counties of South Wales.<sup>115</sup> These mills and factories were largely concentrated in two main areas. The Eastern region in the Llantrisant and Treforest area to the north of Cardiff, and the Western, stretched over the thirty miles from Kidwelly to Port Talbot, centred on Landore and Swansea. Work and conditions in these two areas varied. Millmen in the west, for example, worked from eight to twelve hours a day, with their wages fluctuating between factories, but were generally lower in the west than in the east and in Staffordshire. Workers in both, however, were divided in much the same way into two functional groups, the process workers working directly on the making of tinsplate in mills or tinhouses, and the day workers and maintenance men (boiler firemen, locomotive drivers, engineers, carpenters). The nine thousand, two hundred tinsplate workers in South Wales in 1871 included a high proportion of skilled workers, and Welsh tinmen were widely regarded as being 'an expert labour force'.<sup>116</sup> Their mobility of labour tended to be small, as most mills recruited labour locally. Landore works, for example, employed four hundred and fifty workers in 1874 at seven mills, and drew its labour mainly from the exhausted Pontardawe coal mines, the Morriston copper smelting works and the old Amman Valley forges.<sup>117</sup> There were no Guests or Crawshays among tinsplate owners, and the many tinsplate companies in South Wales were very much smaller by comparison to the iron companies. For all these reasons, therefore, the question of wage differentiation for the tinsplate workers was particularly galling.

Wages, according to J.H.Jones, were largely determined by custom.<sup>118</sup> Tinsplate workers were paid by the month, mostly by piecework, but 'assistance' could be granted after a fortnight (which workers were expected to spend at Company shops). Wage contracts were made for four week periods, therefore a month's notice was required if either side needed to terminate

115. E.H.Brooke, Chronology of the Tinsplate Works of Great Britain (Cardiff 1944), p.1.

116. W.E.Minchington, The British Tinsplate Industry: A History (Oxford 1957), p.33.

117. *ibid.* p.109.

118. J.H.Jones *op.cit.*, p.25.

the agreement. Exact wage levels are difficult to establish for this period,<sup>119</sup> but by using the 1874 'wage list' as a criterion, Minchington estimated that pay differentials ran as follows.

Table 6. Wage Rates in 1874 (For Tinplate Workers, per 12 boxes)  
in shillings and pence. 120

<u>District</u>	<u>Boilermen</u>	<u>Doublers</u>	<u>Furnacemen</u>	<u>Behinder</u>
Melyn	3/2	2/6	2/3	1/0
Morfa	3/5½	2/7½	2/5½	1/1½
1874 List	3/5	2/9½	2/7	1/3

Weekly wages ranged from two pounds per week for rollermen and shearers, one pound fifteen shillings for doublers, one pound ten shillings for furnacemen, fifteen shillings for behinders and thirteen shillings for greaseboys, at a time when the average earnings of adult male workers in the U.K. was nineteen shillings per week.<sup>121</sup>

The rapid development of the tinplate industry from the late 1860's until the mid 1870's complicated John Kane's plans for a unified ironworkers organisation in South Wales. Despite the small sizes of the tinplate firms, the differences in skill and payment between workers, and according to D.Lleufer Thomas, the dogged opposition of Methodism,<sup>122</sup> a trade union of tinplate workers was formed in 1871. Although largely confined to the Western District, it did attract delegates from the eastern region to its early conferences.<sup>123</sup> Under the presidency of Jenkin Thomas and the secretaryship of William Lewis (Lewys Afan) of Cwmafon, the new Independent Association of Tinplate Makers proceeded to prevent Kane's Union from recruiting in some important metalworking areas. Growing out of a small Welsh speaking organisation established at Ystalyfera in 1868 under its secretary James Williams, a local rollerman, it recruited ironworkers and

119. *ibid* p.27, for his argument on 'Miscellany Statistics 1861', and the 1885 wage census.

120. W.E.Minchington *op.cit.*, p.117.

121. *ibid.* p. 117.

122. D.L.Thomas, *Labour Unions in Wales*, (1901) p.13.

123. *Workman's Advocate* 9 July 1875.

tinplate workers throughout the region, claiming a membership of four thousand in the early months of 1874.<sup>124</sup> John Kane was naturally indignant. The tinplate workers had, he explained

'cost the Association a considerable sum of money in getting them organised. Part of them went on strike as soon as they were organised and became free members, and were supported according to rule, and as soon as the victory was proclaimed in their favour they left our ranks and joined another association called the 'Tinworkers Association' (sic).<sup>125</sup>

Kane had supervised the construction of a separate tinplate workers section within his Malleable Ironworkers Union, and it was to this branch that he sought to recruit the Western tin workers. A separate branch was deemed necessary principally because, as G.G.Thomas explained 'the iron and tin trade do not rise and fall together as a rule'.<sup>126</sup> The idea of large industrial units, of the amalgamation of different trades into single unions, was an important one during the labour unrest of the early 1870's. Nevertheless, the Western Tinplate workers maintained their organisational independence, thereby exacerbating inter union disputes. During the boom conditions of 1871 the Independent Tinplate Makers Union utilized the shortage of skilled labour to press for higher wages in specific works, for specific groups of workers, using local action. In these circumstances, it was argued by the members, affiliation to a larger, national union would inevitably prove to be too cumbersome. However, one of the chief grievances of the tinplate makers in 1873 was the great disparity of wage rates in the industry, and in that year the Western union raised the issue of wage parity with East Wales and England. They argued that although wages and productivity had risen, their purchasing power had fallen. The main demand therefore

124. J.H.Jones op.cit., p.35.

125. A.Pugh, Men of Steel, (1951). p.11.

126 Workman's Advocate 9 May 1874.

was for higher and more uniform wage rates. As one observer put it 'there are scarcely two mills in the country...where the prices are exactly the same for mill work'.<sup>127</sup> After a long struggle, however, a new 'wages list' was drawn up by the Owner's Association and approved by workers at Llanelli in July and by a final meeting of tinplate masters in November 1874. Parity with the East was not conceded, the 'list' being little more than a rationalisation of prevailing district wage rates.

Both the iron and the tinplate industries, then, were caught in the spasm of trade union activity during the period 1870 to 1874. But the largest and the most powerful trade union grew out of South Wales' most dynamic industry, coal mining. The South Wales coalfield was at the time the largest in England and Wales, and with a single exception possessed a greater vertical thickness than any known coalfield in the world. It stretched forty five miles from Pontypool in the east to Kidwelly in the west, and eighteen miles from Llantrisant in the south to Tredegar in the north, covering an area of nine hundred and six square miles. Of its three hundred and eighty eight collieries in 1871, seventy three were in Monmouthshire, twentyone in eastern and two hundred and eighteen in western Glamorganshire, sixty in Carmarthenshire and sixteen in Pembrokeshire.<sup>128</sup> The two most important areas, however, were concentrated in the Aberdare and the Rhondda Valleys, whose growth was facilitated by improvements in transportation which accompanied the opening of the Taff Vale Railway in 1841, which opened up the Rhondda, Aberdare and Merthyr Valleys to heavy goods traffic.<sup>129</sup>

Ownership of coal was divided into two distinct groups, the sale household and steam coal owners and the Ironmasters. This division often turned to competition and hostility as prices began to rise sharply after 1871. The pressure of higher prices prompted many colliers to agitate for higher wages. The large disparity of coal wages was explained in terms of the irregularity of steam and the seasonality of house coal mining, contrasted to the regularity of the work of colliers dependent upon ironwork furnaces.

127. R.C. on Trade Unions 1867, OS. 8281.

128. R.C. into the Several Matters Relating to Coal 1871 (XVIII I); Report of Committee (XVIII 952).

129. H.S. Jevons, The British Coal Trade, (1915), p.100.

When the division of ownership was this simple, wage differences could be validated with some justification, but these arguments broke down when the iron masters began to encroach upon, and finally to invade, the sale coal market on a large scale. The sale coal masters were thus formed to compete with iron masters and their lower labour costs. A significant wage gap continued to exist between sale and ironwork collieries even after the iron masters conceded a five per cent advance. Geographic factors contributed much to this disparity. The Merthyr area was already in possession of a collier workforce which had grown, in the course of a century around the ironworks. The western valleys, however, needed to attract new labour. Thus, by the late 1860's, wages were generally twenty five per cent higher in the Rhondda, and fifteen per cent higher at Aberdare than at Merthyr.<sup>130</sup> Coal wage rates were, moreover, extremely volatile : between 1848 and 1875, for example, the rate changed twenty two times.<sup>131</sup> Already, well before the establishment of a sliding scale of wages in 1875 sale coal wages were informally tied to coal selling prices. The older sale coal owners were therefore in a disadvantageous position to compete with the Iron masters who, especially during the depression in iron from 1872, began to increase their exports of sale coal, particularly from Monmouthshire, underselling their western sale coal competitors.

In 1871, however, both groups of owners argued that their markets were becoming depressed, and that there was a need to cut wages and present a united employers' front against a restless collier workforce. The unity eluded them, however, though a reduction of five per cent, or half the desired amount, was imposed. But if the owners could not present a united front or pursue a common policy on the issue of wages, a movement was gaining momentum amongst the colliers which promised to galvanise the whole district into united opposition to wage reductions. That movement took the shape of

130. A. Dalziel, The Colliers Strike in South Wales (Cardiff 1872) pp. 15-16.

131. L.J. Williams, 'The Coal Owners of South Wales 1873-80. Problems of Unity', Welsh History Review Vol.8, No.1, 1976, p.80.

the new miners' union which had grown so rapidly in Lancashire, Staffordshire and the Forest of Dean, the A.A.M. In August 1869, only a month following the establishment of the union in Lancashire, Halliday convened a meeting at Pontypridd of delegates from 'every pit in Glamorgan and Monmouthshire'.<sup>132</sup> Ostensibly held to discuss such items of importance as the Trades Union Bill, the Eight Hour Day and mines inspection, the meeting was really concerned with wage agitation and the building of the union in the South Wales coalfield.<sup>133</sup> Recruitment was very slow until a ten per cent advance in wages was conceded in May 1870, and by January 1871 Halliday reported to the Beehive that 'the horny handed sons of toil in South Wales are joining our Association'.<sup>134</sup> By April 1871 there were three thousand members in and around Aberdare, one thousand three hundred organised in nine lodges at Mountain Ash,<sup>135</sup> and a further thousand in nine lodges at Merthyr.<sup>136</sup> By June 1871 a combined membership of the Rhondda and Aberdare Valleys reached nine thousand.<sup>137</sup> In the same year a long but successful strike against a wage reduction of five per cent was led by the A.A.M. Arbitration, one of the union's key demands, was conceded, and the final settlement not only avoided the proposed reduction, but gave all steam coal colliers a two and a half per cent advance. Disunity among the coal owners, a revival in trade and the intervention of the A.A.M. made this victory possible, and wages were to drift upwards for a further eighteen months.

Table 7. Day Labour Wages at Aberdare Pits <sup>138</sup>  
(in shillings and pence)

<u>Previous to</u>	<u>Colliers</u>	<u>Hauliers</u>	<u>Doorboys</u>	<u>Labourers</u>	
				<u>Surface</u>	<u>Underground</u>
1870-May 1	3/4	3/8	1/4	2/11, 2/10	2/10
1871-April 1	3/2	3/6	1/3	2/9, 2/8	2/8
-Aug. 22	3/3	3/7	1/3½	2/10, 2/9	2/9
1872-Feb. 1	3/7	3/11	1/5	3/1, 3/0	3/0
-June 3	3/11	4/4	1/6¾	3/4¾, 3/3½	3/3½

132. E.W. Evans, The Miners of South Wales, (Cardiff 1961), p.101.

133. *ibid.*

134. Beehive 28 January 1871.

135. *ibid.* 8 April 1871.

136. *ibid.* 13 May 1871.

137. *ibid.* 24 June 1871.

Accompanying this 'wages drift' was the rapid growth of the A.A.M. itself. By September 1872 it claimed a membership of eighteen thousand, five hundred and eighty one<sup>139</sup> in South Wales, but grew to forty three thousand, three hundred and forty four within the space of one year.<sup>140</sup> Following another successful dispute in March 1873, again led by the A.A.M., the union continued to expand its membership, which reached forty seven thousand, nine hundred and sixty five in March 1874.

The labour unrest in South Wales in the period 1871 to 1875 was not, however, confined to the iron, tinsplate and coal industry workers. As their confidence grew in step with the new prosperity, workers from among many other trades and callings became more aggressive and challenging. One labour correspondent observed that one of the manifest features of the period was an

'instructive resolve on the part of all craftsmen and operatives of every class and grade to combine together for the purpose of concerted action, mutual benefit and social elevation.'<sup>141</sup>

Sections of workers well outside the pale of traditional labour organisations were drawn towards forms of industrial militancy. In South Wales even Anglican curates emulated the colliers in demanding higher wages<sup>142</sup> and argued vociferously in favour of the 'principle of competition between the great forces of capital and labour.'<sup>143</sup> In this climate of wage militancy, criticism of any Society which seemed to give way to complacency in industrial bargaining could be quick and sharp. But what is significant in this period is not that older societies were degenerating, but that a large number of new unions, both specialised and general, were being formed. Sapling unions

139. Wigan Observer 5 October 1872.

140. Western Mail 8 October 1873.

141. Workman's Advocate 23 May 1874.

142. J.Morgan, Curates and Colliers : a few facts for laymen , (Cardiff 1873) p.10.

143. *ibid.* pp. 4-5.

began to organise the individual trades of the iron and coal industries. For example, the General Association of Smiths and Strikers was formed in June 1873, and by October of that year had grown to a strength of four hundred,<sup>144</sup> and by May 1874 to nine hundred.<sup>145</sup> The National Association of Enginemen and stokers also began to agitate for the ten hour day for its members and to demand an advance of ten pence per day for the enginemen at the Llanelli and Gwendraeth collieries.<sup>146</sup>

Like the agitation amongst women workers in Bristol and elsewhere, the unions of general labourers developed with the minimum of precedent. But if the experience of organisation was new, the rate of recruitment and the enthusiasm of the membership were extremely high. In England, under the leadership of its 'indomitable commander in chief',<sup>147</sup> Joseph Arch, the National Agricultural Labourers Union (N.A.L.U.) recruited nearly a hundred thousand agricultural labourers in little more than a year.<sup>148</sup> In Wales, however, the N.A.L.U. had no parallel. Lleufer Thomas reported the 'total absence' of farm labourer' unions in the principality,<sup>149</sup> to which D. Howell ascribes the interaction of three principal factors. Firstly, the scattered nature of the agricultural labour force reduced the influence of the agitational and trade unionist press, whilst, secondly, the small size of farms minimised any organised conflict between masters and servants on the farms. Furthermore, as J.P. Dunbabin has also demonstrated,<sup>150</sup> the high incidence of indoor<sup>in</sup> relation to outdoor servants, in South Wales the ratio was as high as one to one, militated strongly against the growth of trade unionism. Finally, Howell argues, hiring fairs, by enabling servants to negotiate wage rates with some degree of uniformity, served as a surrogate form of labourers' trade union.<sup>151</sup>

144. Workman's Advocate 11 October 1873.

145. *ibid.* 9 May 1874.

146. *ibid.* 6 December 1873.

147. *ibid.* 23 May 1874.

148. S. and B. Webb, The History of Trade Unionism, (1920), p.330.

149. R.C. on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire, PP XXXVII 1894, p.124.

150. J.P. Dunbabin, 'The Incidence and Organisation of Agricultural Trade Unionism in the 1870's', Agricultural History Review, Vol.16, pt.2, (1968), p.124.

151. D. Howell, Land and People in Nineteenth Century Wales, (1978), p.110.



Consequently the new labourers' union in South Wales in the early 1870's consisted almost entirely of industrial general labourers, and the first branches of the Bristol, West of England and South Wales Amalgamated Labourers Union were established in the industrial centres of Cardiff and Merthyr in 1873. The Cardiff timber yard and dock labourers, who, by October 1873, had started a second branch of the union, were described in one Cardiff newspaper as being 'extremely ignorant...and possessing very little else beside great physical strength and strong animal passions, they seem to be outside the pale of intelligent life'.<sup>152</sup> Nevertheless, these labourers, at the union's second conference at Cardiff in January 1874 were to be found discussing labour representation in Parliament, the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the arbitration of disputes and methods of extending the union.

#### Patterns of Migration.

It would be misleading to suggest that the several areas which compose the region referred to above formed one coherent industrial unit, despite the sensitivity of their respective industries to market and labour conditions prevailing in neighbouring districts. Workers did not migrate in large numbers except to bordering or nearby counties. In Staffordshire in 1871, for example, only 0.6 per cent of males over twenty and 0.5 per cent females over twenty had been born in Glamorganshire, Monmouthshire or 'Wales, County not stated'.<sup>153</sup> Similarly only 0.3 per cent of males over twenty and 0.2 per cent of females over twenty resident in Glamorganshire had been born in Staffordshire.<sup>154</sup> Nevertheless, if the total numbers were insignificant, the cultural impact of migration on host communities was considerable. The Staffordshire Sentinel in March 1877 wrote of a 'Welsh invasion of Hanley' which allegedly took place in the late 1840's, and complained that by the mid 1870's these immigrants formed a closely knit 'clannish' community of

152. Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian 11 October 1873.

153. Census of England and Wales 1871, Birthplaces of the People.

154. *ibid.*

two thousand concentrated in Upper Hanley, the Northwood area of the town and south of Hope Street. The article also pointed out that this foreign Welsh-speaking community formed a twentieth part of the population of the town.<sup>155</sup> In December 1876 and April 1878 there were reports of attacks on Welsh miners in North Staffordshire and Bloxwich by local colliers, and in January 1877, Welsh members of the Hanley and Far Green Lodge of the A.A.M. demanded that John Morley's address to the 'mass tea meeting' held by the Lodge be translated into Welsh by an interpreter. Their request was granted.<sup>156</sup> Members of this exiled community retained many connections with Wales, and Merthyr's Workman's Advocate, which could afford no full time correspondent in England, published weekly reports 'by our own correspondent in Hanley, North Staffordshire'.

The areas of the region were also bound together by the activities of trade unionists. As the above social geography of the region suggests, this was particularly true of the representatives of the younger, growing organisations, such as the A.A.M. or the Ironworkers Union. Halliday and Alexander MacDonald, leaders of the A.A.M. and the Miners National Association (N.A.M.) respectively, frequently travelled from Staffordshire, through the Forest of Dean to South Wales as well as through Lancashire and the North of England generally. Thomas Halliday, born near Bolton, Lancashire, had married a Welsh-born wife, and following the collapse of the A.A.M. in August 1875, he migrated to South Wales, earning his living 'by selling small stores like ropes and oil around the Welsh collieries'.<sup>157</sup> Halliday also stood as a Workingmen's candidate in Merthyr in the General Election of January 1874, whilst A.A.Walton, a radical gentleman from Brecon similarly stood at the same election in Stoke on Trent. Miners' agents were also notoriously cosmopolitan. Henry Mitchard, for example, attended A.A.M. Congresses between 1870 and 1875 as representative of Abertillery (twice)

155. Staffordshire Sentinel 3 March 1877.

156. Potteries Examiner 9 December 1876; Midland Examiner and Wolverhampton Times 27 April 1878; Potteries Examiner 13 January 1877.

157. J.Saville, "Thomas Halliday", J.Bellamy, J.Saville, Dictionary of Labour Biography, Vol.III, (1976), p. 94.

Caerphilly, Cwmbran, North Wales and Argoed.<sup>158</sup> William Brown, A.A.M. agent for North Staffordshire, was also a frequent visitor to the Forest of Dean and South Wales, and his speeches were often published in local newspapers in many mining areas.<sup>159</sup>

Another growing trade union with a keen interest in both Staffordshire and South Wales was the National Amalgamated Malleable Ironworkers' Association of Great Britain. Again, Ironworkers' agents provided valuable and much publicised links between the organised workers of different districts. Phillip Harries was one such agent. A Welsh speaking Welshman from North Staffordshire, treasurer of the Potteries Labour Representation League in 1871<sup>160</sup> and receiver of a testimonial of 'a well stocked desk with £3. 12. 6. and a pair of 8s 6d real pebble spectacles for services rendered to the Ironworkers' union' in the North Staffordshire district in 1872,<sup>161</sup> Harries then became one of the two agents of the Ironworkers' union in the South Wales District in 1873, and achieved a measure of fame and recognition as a correspondent, in both English and Welsh, to local periodicals.<sup>162</sup>

Through media such as these organised workers throughout the regions were made aware of the activities of labour in other areas. If the region was large and its population diverse, workers in the region during the 1860's and the 1870's were, nonetheless, not wholly isolated from each other, nor were they immune to the contagion of new and radical ideas which penetrated their separate and discrete localities. Of course, the local newspapers of Owen and Morgan were not the only means of distributing news and information among these groups of workers, and throughout the 1870's, labour newspapers were compelled to compete with an expanding local newspaper industry. The condition of this industry in the abovementioned regions will be examined below.

#### Local Newspapers.

'The rise of a popular press in the mid-Victorian years was one of  
158. Wigan Observer 22 April 1870, 6 April 1872, 3 April 1873, 8 October 1873;  
Western Mail 7 April 1875.

159. For example Workman's Advocate 11 July 1876.

160. Potters Examiner 17 June 1871.

161. *ibid.* 31 August 1872.

162. For example, the Workman's Advocate and Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr from their first issue on 6 September 1873.

the great silent social revolutions of the age'.<sup>163</sup> According to C. Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory, one hundred and twenty weekly and daily newspapers were being published locally in the counties of Staffordshire, Shropshire, Derbyshire, Worcestershire, Monmouthshire and Glamorganshire in 1870. Of these forty six were published in the counties of Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Glamorganshire. The great majority were weeklies whose average price hovered at just under a penny halfpenny unstamped and two pence halfpenny stamped. Many, particularly in industrial areas, were distinctly Liberal in persuasion.

John Vincent has pointed out that the mid-Victorian provincial press was, in general, dominated by local Liberal politicians,<sup>164</sup> and the newspapers of Staffordshire and Glamorganshire are no exception. In Staffordshire seven out of a total of eighteen locally published newspapers, nearly thirty nine per cent, were Liberal, whilst a further ten were euphemistically termed 'Independent' or 'Neutral'. There were no Conservative newspapers. The Staffordshire Sentinel, published in Hanley, North Staffordshire, for example, professed to 'advocate national principles of social and political progress, without being the organ of any party or sect',<sup>165</sup> whilst the Walsall Free Press of South Staffordshire advocated 'progressive principles, and gives digests of local and general news, with artistic and scientific and literary information'.<sup>166</sup> The Uttoxeter New Era, an 'independent' newspaper, on the other hand, took 'no part in public discussion, but supports the agricultural interest'.<sup>167</sup> Thirteen of the eighteen local newspapers of Staffordshire had commenced publication during or since 1855, and a majority of thirteen were priced at one penny unstamped, twopence stamped, the highest price of the remaining five papers being fourpence for the Staffordshire Advertiser. Each newspaper was owned by separate and independent

163. P. Adelman, Gladstone, Disraeli and Later Victorian Politics, (1970), p.5.

164. J. Vincent, The Formation of the British Liberal Party 1857-1868, (1972) p.100.

165. C. Mitchell and Co. op.cit., 1870.

166. ibid.

167. ibid.

proprietors except for two papers owned by W.B.Upcott, the Midland Counties Express and the Wolverhampton Chronicle. Circulation figures are difficult to assess with any accuracy. An assessment of the average weekly circulations of four Staffordshire newspapers was made in August 1840 which concluded that the sales of most papers in the district hovered at or around a thousand copies per week.

Table 8.      Circulation of Staffordshire Newspapers August 1840

<u>Newspaper</u>	<u>Average Weekly Circulation August 1840.</u>
Staffordshire Advertiser	4115
Staffordshire Gazette	1269
Wolverhampton Chronicle	1226
Staffordshire Examiner	1153      168

By 1870 the Staffordshire Advertiser was issued with one hundred and twelve thousand stamps annually, the Wolverhampton Chronicle with thirty eight thousand stamps and the Staffordshire Sentinel with seven thousand stamps.<sup>169</sup>

The provincial press of Glamorganshire followed a similar pattern of development. Eight of the sixteen locally published newspapers were, in 1870, Liberal, six were 'independent' or 'neutral' and only two, the Cardiff Guardian, published by the Cardiff Guardian Newspaper and Printing Company Limited, and the Western Mail, were Conservative papers. Again all the papers were separately, and the majority individually, owned with the exception of the Cardiff Shipping Gazette and the Cardiff Times which were both under the proprietorship of D. Duncan. Eleven of the sixteen Glamorganshire newspapers had started publication at or since 1855, and ten were priced at a penny unstamped, two pence stamped, the most expensive of the remaining papers being the Liberal Swansea Cambrian at four pence per week. There were three daily papers, the Western Mail, the Cambria Daily Leader and the South Wales Daily News. Circulation figures again are difficult

168. Table of Comparative Circulations, SP 107, Stoke Central Library.

169. Return of Registered Newspapers in the UK, and of stamps at 1d issue to each for the Year ending 30 June 1870, (1870), P.P. XLI.399.(460).

to estimate correctly, but in 1870 the Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian was issued with thirty two thousand stamps, the Cardiff Times with ten thousand stamps and the Western Mail with twelve thousand four hundred and eighty.<sup>170</sup> Some papers, including Y Gwladgarwr, Y Tyst a'r Dydd and Y Fellten were written in the Welsh language.

In Bristol, similarly, five out of eight local papers were Liberal, only one being Conservative; five were sold at a penny per copy and three were dailies. Six were begun since 1855, and each were independently owned except for two papers owned by P.S. McIiver, the Bristol Observer and the Western Daily Press. The Liberal Bristol Gazette and the Bristol Mercury were each issued with three thousand and thirty six thousand stamps respectively in 1870.

In sharp contrast to the provincial press of Staffordshire, Glamorganshire and Bristol, however, newspapers in Worcestershire were, on the whole, of quite a different political character. Of thirteen locally published papers, only two were Liberal, nine were either 'neutral' or 'independent', and two were Conservative. Only six sold at one penny unstamped, the average price of newspapers in Worcestershire being over one and a half pence unstamped, two and a half pence stamped. Ten were begun since 1855, and each were separately owned except G. Williams' Kidderminster Times, Pershore Guardian (which also appeared as the Vale of Evesham News and the Worcester Advertiser).<sup>171</sup>

#### Literacy and Education.

It has been argued that the expansion of the newspaper press during the nineteenth century presupposed, quite rationally, a corresponding increase in the level of literacy amongst the population. Yet, a convincing method of quantifying the level of literacy in the nineteenth century populace has eluded both contemporary and modern historians. Assessments,

170. *ibid.*

171. Return of Registered Newspapers *op.cit.*, Appendix to the Report from the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps.

however, have been attempted. Lawrence Stone and M. Sanderson, for example, have studied closely the effects of early industrialisation on literacy, from which Stone concludes that from 1800 to 1820 the level of literacy remained static or even possibly declined amongst the working-class.<sup>172</sup> The evidence of one contemporary observer, Lord Brougham, who in 1816 informed Parliament that of nine thousand, seven hundred and fifty six recent marriages, neither of the partners could sign their names in the parish register,<sup>173</sup> seems to support Stone's argument. Furthermore, almost half a century later Louis Blanc presented his French readers with a pessimistic account of the effectiveness of English education. According to Blanc two million two hundred thousand children were entitled to attend state-aided schools in 1862, yet only nine hundred and twenty thousand actually did so, and that most of those were forced to leave school at the age of ten or twelve.<sup>174</sup>

Modern historians such as Francis Williams deduce from this kind of evidence that mass illiteracy was quite normal until the amelioration brought about by the Liberal Education Act of 1870 and the subsequent creation of 'the new literates of the Board Schools'.<sup>175</sup> This interpretation suggests that the working-class press of the mid to late Victorian period, and of the 1870's in particular, stands at the critical juncture of mass literacy, that it reflects and symbolises the entrance of workers as an articulately literate class into the intellectual and literary disciplines.

This view has, rightly, been contested by, among others, H.J.Perkin. In a convincing argument,<sup>176</sup> he points to the abundant

172. L.Stone, 'Literacy and Education in England 1640-1900', Past and Present 42, 1969; M.Sanderson, 'Social Mobility in the Industrial Revolution', Past and Present, 56, 1972.

173. Hansard, Series 3, XXXIV (1816), Cols. 654-6, quoted in Berridge, 'Popular Journalism', *op.cit.*

174. L.Blanc, Letters on England, Vol.I (1866), p.301.

175. F.Williams, Dangerous Estate, (1957), p.130; Berridge (*op.cit.*, p.10) refers to Herd, Dibblee and Friedrichs as notable representatives of this interpretation.

176. H.J.Perkin, 'Origins of the Popular Press', History Today, 7 July 1957, p.434.

evidence of popular forms of literary communication which preceded the Education Act of 1870, and in so doing encourages historians to take a different approach to the problem of defining the term literacy. Earlier in the 1950's R.K.Webb had made the valuable suggestion that in terms of the kind of literacy required for the comprehension of popular newspapers written in clear, unsophisticated language, the term need not imply more than the basic ability to read. This basic skill was in any case more widely taught in schools than was writing,<sup>177</sup> and, as Berridge points out, is one which can be acquired without great difficulty outside of formal education.<sup>178</sup>

To illustrate Webb's argument the existence of a dynamic unstamped press may be referred to, or, more specifically, the cases of sensational ~~readings~~ may be cited. For example, Catnach's 'Full, True and Particular Account of the Murder of Weare by Thurtell and his companions' sold two hundred and fifty thousand copies in 1823, and five years later his 'Confessions and Execution of William Corder' was reputed to have sold one million, one hundred and sixty six thousand copies.<sup>179</sup> Literacy, if understood as a rudimentary ability to read, was, therefore, widespread amongst working people in Britain well before the passing of the 1870 Education Act. There is little evidence of a 'critical juncture' of mass literacy to explain the phenomenon of a working-class press in the late mid-Victorian period. F.Mayne suspected as much as far back as 1850:

'The working classes of the country, both in agricultural and manufacturing districts, are, to a great extent, a reading people; a reading and a thinking people!'.<sup>180</sup>

Even in the early 1870's, the education of children in North Staffordshire, for example, was determined as much by the pressures of work

177. R.K.Webb, 'Working Class Readers in Early Victorian England', English Historical Review, 65, 1950; R.K.Webb, The British Working Class Reader, (1955) *passim*.

178. V.S.Berridge, 'Popular Journalism', *op.cit.*, p.11.

179. R.D.Altick, The English Common Reader, (Chicago 1957), p. 382.

180. F.Mayne, 'The Literature...', *op.cit.*, p.619.



and family income as by the efforts of the School Boards, established in 1870, and the Factory Acts. It has been shown how the pottery industry continued to employ many children in this period,, a large number of whom entered the trade as half-time labourers at the age of nine.<sup>181</sup> Some, according to one Report,

'worked in the potteries until they are old enough to go into the mines, and then they leave the factories without any notice ... they do this because they may go to work full-time in the mines.'<sup>182</sup>

As a result of the half-time working system for children in the Potteries, schools in the Longton area operated a dual system of education. The Rector of Longton, the Rev. Adam Clarke, described it as 'two schools, a half-time boys' and girls' school, and a whole time boys' and girls school.'<sup>183</sup> According to a representative of the Longton School Board, this new half-time education system for children who worked the remainder of the day in the pottery factories, had 'improved education wonderfully'.<sup>184</sup> A decade earlier one factory inspector had reported anxiously that the result of a 'want of education' among the pottery workers was 'that labour remains rude, and in time becomes insubordinate'.<sup>185</sup> Nevertheless, out of six hundred and sixteen parents employed in Hanley in 1866, it was found that the children of two hundred and ninety six of them could read and that the children of the remaining three hundred and twenty could not. The trades of parents whose children were applicants for work in the earthenware industry between September 1 and 31 December 1866 included the following:

181. Minutes of Evidence to the Report for the Select Committee on the Factory and Workshop Acts, Part II, evidence of C.Bowling, 11 June 1875. (4651).

182. *ibid.*

183. *ibid.* Evidence of A.Clarke, 8 July 1875 (10556).

184. *ibid.* (10564).

185. Report of the Inspector of Factories for Half Year Ending 31 October 1865, (1866), Report of Robert Baker, p. 93.

Table 9.

Trades of Parents and the number of persons in those trades in Hanley whose children could and could not read, and who were applicants for Earthenware work between 1 September and 31st December 1866.

<u>Trade</u>	<u>No. Could Read.</u>	<u>No. Could Not Read.</u> <sup>186</sup>
Colliers	41	73
Labourers	22	29
Mould Makers	2	--
Potters	23	11
Pressers	12	8
Plate Makers	3	2
Puddlers	14	3
Slip Makers	4	6
Saggar Makers	4	3
Turners	6	6
Placers	6	6

Only among colliers, labourers and slip makers was the proportion of illiterates higher than the literates, and in certain parental occupational groups, such as the puddlers, the proportion of literate children was relatively high. Thus, even when children received only a minimum of formal education, many had grasped the elements of reading ability. Josiah Wedgwood, for example, whose father, grandfather and granduncle were all potters in North Staffordshire, was himself set to work as a thrower at a small pottery factory whilst still 'a mere boy', though not, according to Samuel Smiles, before he 'had learned to read and write at the village school.'<sup>187</sup>

In South Wales, however, working-class literacy was complicated

186. Report of the Inspectors of Factories for the Half Year Ending 31 October 1866 (1867), Report of R.Baker, p.116, Table I.

187. S.Smiles, Self Help, (1880), p.89.

by the prevalence of both English and Welsh languages. The first language census was not conducted until 1891, but its results do give an indication of the extent of the language cleavage in Welsh towns and counties during the early 1870's. The division of the working-class in South Wales along linguistic lines is an interesting one which deserves close attention. In Merthyr, for example, of an enlarged population of one hundred and seventeen thousand, two hundred and five, thirty four thousand five hundred, or 29.5 per cent were monoglot English speakers, thirty five thousand two hundred, or 30 per cent, Monoglot Welsh, and the remaining thirty nine thousand eight hundred, or 33.9 per cent, considered themselves to have both languages. With two exceptions, this population represents the highest concentration of Welsh speakers of any industrial town in South Wales.

Table 10.      Analysis of the Spoken Language.i) South Wales Towns.<sup>188</sup>

<u>Town</u>	<u>Population in 1891</u>	<u>% English</u>	<u>% Welsh</u>	<u>% Bilingual</u>
Pontardwe	21,700	7.3	62.9	23.6
Llanelli	52,382	11.8	48.4	33.6
Pontypridd	146,812	34.1	27.6	31.7
Neath	56,673	31.4	26	36.2
Bridgend	51,453	37.4	22.9	33.7
Swansea	114,326	49.9	19.6	23.8
Bedwellty	64,866	59.9	10.5	23.3
Gower	11,107	70.4	7.7	16.6
Newport	96,796	81.9	2.3	8.4
Cardiff	173,796	79.6	1.8	11.2

Merthyr's population of Welsh speakers was, moreover, higher than Glamorgan's mean of 20.5 per cent of the county's 693,072 inhabitants. The remaining

188. Census of England and Wales 1891. Language of Inhabitants. The remaining inhabitants of Merthyr were infants under two years of speakers of another language. Others failed to return statements.

47.1 per cent spoke only English, whilst a further 25.6 per cent were conversant with both languages. Apart from a few industrial enclaves and the town of Merthyr Tydfil itself, then, Welsh remained predominantly the language of the Western rural hinterland and of the immigrants who came from there to the South Wales industrial belt.

Table 11. Analysis of the Spoken Language. ii) The Welsh Counties.<sup>189</sup>

<u>County</u>	<u>1891 Population</u>	<u>% English</u>	<u>% Welsh</u>	<u>% Bilingual.</u>
Cardigan	86,383	4.6	71.3	19.8
Merioneth	64,726	5.6	70.8	18.6
Anglesey	34, 219	6	67.8	21
Caernarfon	125,585	10	62.7	22.5
Carmarthen	118,624	9.9	53.4	31.1
Denbigh	116,698	32.8	31.9	30
Flint	42,565	30.2	24.6	39.6.
Montgomery	67,297	47.2	24.3	23.5
Pembroke	82,003	63.4	16.7	13.2
Brecknock	52,872	58.8	9.9	25
Monmouth	275,242	79	3.6	10.8
Radnor	17,119	89	0.4	5.4
(Glamorgan	693,072	47.1	20.5	25.6)

#### Self Help and Friendly Societies.

By the early 1870's Friendly Societies were well established in working-class communities throughout the region. In Staffordshire, for example, there were by 1872 four hundred and ninety branches of various friendly and benefit societies,<sup>190</sup> and in the Potteries of North Staffordshire

189. Census of England and Wales 1891 op.cit.

190. Friendly and Benefit Societies' Commission, Report of Hon.E.L.Stanley p.160. 1874 (1996) XXIII.

alone in the same year there were ninety<sup>191</sup> nine branches of thirty three different Friendly Societies with an aggregate membership of eleven thousand, three hundred and ten.<sup>191</sup> Workers joined such societies for a variety of reasons, the greatest doubtless being the limited social security which they offered in times of distress, sickness or death. They also afforded opportunities of substantially improving the quality of daily life. One Factory Inspector observed in 1871 that

'the dwellings of the working men ... are ... incompatible with cleanliness and order. Some have but one living and one bed room; very few have two bedrooms',<sup>192</sup>

and complained of the general 'prolifigacy of working men and women of the Potteries'.<sup>193</sup> To these he contrasted 'the well-to-do working class',<sup>194</sup> with their well-built and healthy homes which 'they had built themselves by means of building Societies'.<sup>195</sup> Workers of many different trades and occupations joined such Friendly and Benefit Societies. In one society in the Potteries, the Ancient Order of Foresters, there were one thousand and eighty three potters or glassmakers, three hundred and sixty nine miners, eighty five labourers and sixty five brickmakers. <sup>196</sup>

In addition to these large multi-occupational societies, workers in specific works not infrequently formed independent, autonomous benefit societies. According to one Special Report on the Potteries published in 1874, there were 'in the greater number of the workshops of the Potteries, small friendly or savings societies, 'managed by the men themselves',<sup>197</sup>, divided annually, usually at Martinmas, when in the period before 1866, and

191. *ibid.* Special Report on the Potteries, pp. 161-2.

192. Reports of the Inspectors of Factories, Half Year Ending 30 April 1871 (1871), pp. 48-9.

193. *ibid.*

194. *ibid.* p.49.

195. *ibid.* p.48.

196. Friendly and Benefit Societies' Commission, Special Report *op.cit.* p.162.

197. *ibid.*, p.163.

and in some cases continuing after that date, labour in the earthenware industry was hired for the year. On some banks, all new workers were expected to join 'but there was no compulsion,, and some did refuse'.<sup>198</sup> These small societies generally asked for a three pence contribution per week, and a one shilling entrance fee. Members were taken in at any age, and new hands were to come into immediate benefit. These benefits were of the order of six shillings a week for thirteen weeks absence from work, followed by half-pay. For funerals, members were levied one shilling. Similar societies were also found among coal miners in Staffordshire, where they were called 'pit clubs' or 'ground clubs', which again divided once a year. In North Staffordshire they were managed exclusively by collier members, although in South Staffordshire ground clubs were usually under the control of the employers, as a result of which 'no account is given'.<sup>199</sup>

Similarly, Friendly and Benefit Societies of many descriptions proliferated in Merthyr Tydfil. Between 1870 and 1875 they included the Ancient Britons, the Industrial Benefit Society, the Order of True Ivorites of St. David's Unity, the Lamp of Wales Society, the Loyal Order of Alfreds, Mountaineers Refuge, the National Union Life Assurance and Sick Friendly Society, the New Friendly Society, the True Orangemen, the Philanthropic Association of Engineers, the Merthyr Unity Philanthropic Institution, the Sympathetic Benefit and Friendly Society, the Temperance Aid Society and the Temple of Peace Friendly Society.<sup>200</sup> In 1872, J.T. Morgan presided over Court 4484 (Merthyr Tydfil) of the Ancient Order of Foresters,<sup>201</sup> whilst in January of that year he launched his own Royal Cambrian Friendly Society, offering life policies of between one pound and two hundred pounds, six to fourteen shillings per week sickness policies and endowments for children and adults.<sup>202</sup> No public record survives of this society, which suggests that the venture was unsuccessful.

198. *ibid.*

199. *ibid.* pp.163, 172.

200. FS1/923 and FS1/924, P.R.O.

201 Merthyr Times 3 February 1872.

202. *ibid.* 27 February 1872.

It is difficult to ascertain whether or not local friendly societies or related associations were encouraged by their members to purchase periodicals or to support newspapers directly by subscription. Collet suggested in 1851 that 'many of the working classes now club together to take newspapers, for they feel it necessary to have something of the kind'.<sup>203</sup> Records of one South Wales society, albeit a Mechanics Institute, suggests that by 1884 it was not unusual for such voluntary associations to do so.

Table 12. Payments for Newspapers and Periodicals, Mechanics' Institute, Milford Haven, Year Ending 31 March 1884. 204

<u>Company</u>	<u>Sum in £.</u>
W.H.Smith and Son	£5.9.7.
G.P.Ormond	£5.9.4½
J.M.Minty	£0.13.6.
<u>Total</u>	<u>£11.11.11½</u>

The Readership : a Social Geography.

The whole geographical region discussed above is defined not by an intrinsic coherence or unity but solely by the known extent of the circulation of certain working class newspapers published in Hanley, Madeley, Burton, Cinderford, Blakeney, Tamworth, Wednesbury, Wolverhampton, Hednesford, Bristol and Merthyr Tydfil during the early and mid 1870's. Readers of these papers were employed in a patchwork of different industries, both urban and rural, light and heavy. As a body, these workers appear fractured and atomised in their many, often isolated, groups or communities. Nevertheless, in some important ways, diverse elements within this large region of western industrial Britain did possess certain common characteristics. In North Staffordshire, South Staffordshire, South Gloucestershire and South Wales the coal mining and the iron producing and manufacturing industries were

203. Report of Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps 1851, Evidence of Collet (927)

204. Statement of Account, M.H.Mechanics' Institute, Picton Castle MSS 3899.

central to local economies, and provided valuable points of reference and continuity to working class radicals operating throughout the region. There were, of course, other industries, some peculiar to certain areas, such as pottery making in North Staffordshire or nailmaking in South Staffordshire and North Worcestershire, others, such as engineering, tinplate making or printing were to be found throughout most of the region, and their workers played a significant role in the organised labour movements of the region generally.

The growing organisations of coal miners and ironworkers of the early 1870's, moreover, ensured that small groups of activists - trade union and/or radical - whose constituencies often overlapped, maintained contact with each other and moved freely about, even from South Wales to North Staffordshire and South Lancashire. Partially in consequence of the work done by these activists in disseminating the organisations, the theories and the politics of various trade unions and political groups, similar patterns of industrial relations developed in similar ways in different industries and in different areas. Despite the wide discrepancies in work customs, most prominently perhaps the widely varying custom-determined length of working hours and other work procedures,<sup>205</sup> the growth of certain common trades unions throughout the region, particularly the A.A.M. and the National Amalgamated Malleable Ironworkers' Association, stimulated the campaign for permanent Arbitration Boards to mediate disputes, or aroused workers' interest in certain forms of 'centralised' or 'amalgamated' union organisational structures. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that concepts of trade unionism were, in the late 1860's and the 1870's being complicated by the upsurge of 'general' unionism among the unskilled and by threats posed by women workers, particularly, though not exclusively, in the Bristol area, to both customary work processes and the established structures of trade unions generally. The implantation and concentration of immigrant communities,

205. For example consult Children's Employment Commission, 1842, First Report, pp. 106-125.



seen most markedly in the case of the Welsh speaking community in North Staffordshire, also contributed to the heightening of an awareness of the region as a whole among certain groups of workers, despite the fact that the actual level of geographical migration was low.

In addition to the changing sectional interests of workers editors of working-class newspapers were also aware of more general problems of literacy prevailing in the region, of the need to test the success of existing local newspapers, and the strength to sustain a working class press of local clubs and societies. By the early 1870's investigations into all three areas proved positive : literacy was certainly adequate to the task of comprehending newspapers, local newspapers had flourished since the abolition of the stamp duty in 1855 and autonomous working class institutions, whether trade unions, friendly societies, 'bank' or 'ground' clubs, were vibrant enough not only to purchase copies of working class newspapers regularly, but, with some persuasion, to contribute to their funds, help out in libel cases, purchase shares in their printing companies and distribute and advertise copies of such papers generally among the community at large.

#### ii) Letters to the Editor.

The most specific evidence available pertaining to at least one section of the readership is to be found in readers' letters. In addition to providing significant pointers to the issues which the readership found important, letters often also provide the names, the addresses and the occupations of individual readers. Letters columns have always played an important part in British newspapers. They are, according to one Royal Commission on the Press,

'traditional; indeed letters to the editor pre-date newspapers, while "correspondence" pre-dated journalism and subsequently gave its name to "correspondents"'.<sup>206</sup>

206. O. Boyd-Barrett, C. Seymour-Ure, J. Tunstall, Studies on the Press, Royal Commission on the Press, Report, (1977), p.211.

Letters occupied as prominent a place in mid-Victorian labour newspapers as they did in the eighteenth century periodicals. In 1874 an average of 6.7 per cent of each edition of the Examiner was devoted to readers' letters, whilst in 1875 the proportion of total space consumed by letter columns in the Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr remained at a stable 25.8 per cent. For the editors, therefore, readers' letters were an important resource.

Notwithstanding the wealth of information which they supply, letters printed in newspapers should be approached with some caution. Like local news items and other editorial material, each printed letter was carefully selected by the editor, and the balance of opinion in letters columns may be said to reflect more accurately the editorial view than the views of a cross section of the readership. The degree of editorial supervision over the content and quality of readers' letters is demonstrated by the editors' stated policy concerning correspondence in general and by their replies to individual correspondents. In an early statement on the matter, Owen promised that

'letters of all shades of opinion will be admitted, and the columns of the Examiner will be thrown open to free discussion on all points, theological matters alone excluded.'<sup>207</sup>

Thus, in spite of the fact that the editor did not hold himself responsible for the opinions of his correspondents, and offered them 'a free field for all',<sup>208</sup> certain themes were to be studiously avoided. In addition to religious issues, he warned that 'personalities' would also 'be strictly suppressed'.<sup>209</sup> Moreover, to facilitate the 'rapid editing',<sup>210</sup> of letters, correspondents were requested to write their letters on one half of their paper only.<sup>211</sup>

In his replies to individual writers, Owen revealed two main

207. Miner and Workmen's Examiner 6 June 1874.

208. *ibid.* 13 March 1875.

209. *ibid.*

210. *ibid.* 13 June 1874.

211. *ibid.*

reasons for the rejection of letters deemed unsuitable for publication. The first was a judicious concern for the libel laws.<sup>212</sup> Replying to a letter sent to the editor which accused a Lilleshall minister of ill-treating orphan children, Owen regretted the fact that the letter could not be included in the Examiner.

'The letter is ... a libel, and its publication would involve us or the writer, and perhaps both, in unpleasant consequences'.<sup>213</sup>

The second criterion was quality. To one correspondent who had sent Owen his poems for publication, the editor replied

'The verses are really not good enough for insertion. We are sorry to disappoint you, but we have to turn away such very good productions that we cannot insert all sent to us'.<sup>214</sup>

.. To another hopeful Owen was less diplomatic, 'We must decline to publish your verses', he informed the correspondent. 'They are sheer doggerel'.<sup>215</sup>

These personal replies to unprinted letters give some indication of the volume of correspondence sent to the editor of the Examiner. Between February and May 1876, for example, Owen replied to forty five such unprinted letters.

Morgan also warned his readers against writing religious or 'personal' letters to his papers. In one reply to an unprinted letter he summed up his policy as regards readers' letters.

'Adams - Your letter is in reality nothing more nor less than a mass of abusive tirade against Christianity and its ministers, and we are really astonished at the amount of

212. See 'Newspapers and the Law', Appendix IX esp. pp.303-8.

213. Miner and Workmen's Examiner 25 September 1875.

214. *ibid.* 3 October 1874.

215. *ibid.* 22 April 1876

valuable time you must have wasted over each nonsense....

Our columns are only open for the discussion of topics of real interest and utility to our fellow-men; and whilst quite willing to allow the utmost scope in this direction, we cannot think of inserting any conglomeration of bile and other miserable stuff which any disordered brain may produce. We would advise our correspondent to utilize his talents by treating in a practical manner subjects of real usefulness to his fellow workmen, and his communication may then come up to our standard.<sup>216</sup>

Despite these editorial strictures, Owen insisted that the correspondence columns of the Examiner 'contained the genuine expression of working class opinion'.<sup>217</sup> Whatever the criteria of selection, and however edited the individual letters may have been before publication, letters columns remain an important source of information about the readership.

.. As Stuart Hall et al have argued in relation to the contemporary press

'In the letters columns, readers' opinions appear in the press in their least mediated form. The selection is ultimately in the hands of the editor, but the spectrum of letters submitted is not...'<sup>218</sup>

With these qualifications and reservations in mind, three important issues are raised by an analysis of readers' letters over a period of time: the identity of correspondents, their geographical distribution and the subject matter of their letters. Each will be considered in turn.

By a narrow majority, most letters printed in the Examiner and in the Workman's Advocate were signed by correspondents using pseudonyms.

216. Workman's Advocate 14 February 1874.

217. Tonworth Miners' Examiner 13 September 1873.

218. S. Hall, C. Critcher, T. Jefferson, J. Clarke, B. Roberts, Policing the Crisis, Mugging, the State, and Law and Order, (1978), p.120.

Owen insisted that 'all correspondents must furnish their real names and addresses, not necessarily for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith'.<sup>219</sup> Nevertheless he defended

'the adoption ofonyms by newspaper correspondents  
... as necessary in many cases for the self-protection  
of men who write on questions of trade disputes and  
unionism'.<sup>220</sup>

A sizeable minority of letters, however, were signed by name, and from these it is possible to discern distinct patterns of correspondence in the Owen and the Morgan papers. Of five hundred and sixty four letters printed in the Examiner between 1874 and 1878 inclusive, 43.5 per cent were signed by their authors. Of these over half were by trade union officials, the vast majority of whom - 94 per cent in both 1875 and 1876 - were officials of either the A.A.M. or the Enginemen's union. From 1874 to 1876 a quarter of all the letters printed in the Examiner, whether named or not, were written by trade unionists working in the coal industry.

Conversely, in the Workman's Advocate and the Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr only a small minority of letters were contributed by officials of collier trade unions. Furthermore, in 1874 only 43 per cent of all the named letters were written by officials of any trade union, a mere 13 per cent of the total number of letters printed in the Workman's Advocate. In the Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr only William Abraham (Mabon) and Phillip Harries wrote letters in their capacities as trade union agents.

Some of these officials were regular contributors. Martin Cooper, Shropshire miners' agent, wrote sixteen letters to the Examiner in 1874 and seventeen in 1875. Another regular contributor to the Examiner was an agricultural labourer from Lincolnshire (the Lincolnshire Thrasher) who

219. Miner and Workmen's Examiner 13 March 1875.

220. ibid. 25 September 1875.

wrote nineteen letters to the paper in 1874 alone. Similarly William Lewis (Lewys Afan), secretary of the Tinplate Makers union wrote fifteen letters to the Workman's Advocate in 1874, and Phillip Harries, ironworker's agent for Glamorganshire, nine. David Cynwyd Davies (D.C.D.), a Welsh speaking ironworker from West Hartlepool also contributed nine letters during 1874. Letters signed with the authors' names, therefore, were, in the main, written by a relatively small group of full-time trade unionists and their prolific letter writing sympathisers.

Although many correspondents preferred not to append their names to their letters, virtually all agreed to the inclusion of an address. Consequently it is possible to chart the changing geographic distribution of correspondents to the Examiner over a four year period. Not unexpectedly, the majority of letters originated in Staffordshire, Gloucestershire and Shropshire, no doubt reflecting the principal circulation areas of the Examiner editions. However, the proportions of letters sent from these counties alter significantly during this period: those written in Shropshire increase from 8.2 per cent in 1874 to 67.8 per cent in 1876, whilst, conversely, those written in Gloucestershire decline from 19.8 per cent of the total in 1874 to a mere 0.8 per cent in 1876. Letters written in Staffordshire remain relatively stable in proportion to those from other counties. Another characteristic of this period is the contraction of the geographical area from which letters were received. In 1874 letters were received from twenty one English and Welsh counties, whereas in 1877 all letters printed in the Examiner were sent from either Staffordshire or Shropshire. Letters to the Workman's Advocate were written almost exclusively within South Wales, principally in the Merthyr, Dowlais, Aberdare area in the north east and the Llanelli and Llansamlet district to the west.<sup>221</sup>

The vast majority of letters, irrespective of origin, dealt with issues which affected the working lives of the readers. Thus, 73 per cent

221. See Appendix II.

of all letters written to the Examiner in 1875 were concerned directly with the affairs of coal miners. Other issues, including trade unionism in general, the metalworkers, engineers, agricultural labourers, local and national politics, friendly societies and social conditions in general amounted only to between 1.4 per cent and 13.7 per cent of all letters. This survey of all the letters printed in the Examiner between 1874 and 1876 substantiates in its broad outlines the pattern of correspondence inferred from an analysis of a less representative sample of named letters. This pattern, which remained relatively stable until 1876 was altered radically in 1877. The total number of letters printed was reduced from one hundred and eighteen in 1876 to twenty four in the following year. The majority of the latter were reports of local friendly societies and letters discussing the issues of nonconformity and social conditions. Despite the fact that in 1877 the Miner, direct successor to the Examiner, was aimed exclusively at a readership engaged in the coal industry, the proportion of letters concerned with mining issues declined sharply from 53.4 per cent in 1876 to only 16.7 per cent in 1877.

Letters to the Workman's Advocate reveal a different pattern of correspondence, although as in the Examiner most were concerned with the affairs of various trade unions whilst only a small minority dealt with political matters. Of the two hundred and fifty three letters printed in the bilingual Workman's Advocate between September 1873 and August 1874 only 13.4 per cent were concerned with miners' issues, all of which were written in Welsh. The largest single occupational group discussed in readers' letters to this paper during this period were tinsmith workers, which as a subject group accounted for thirty per cent of the total. Other letters were concerned with the affairs of ironworkers and puddlers, smiths, firemen, enginemmen, general trade unionism and politics. Seventy per cent of all the letters sent to the Workman's Advocate during the bilingual period were written in Welsh.

From August to December 1874 the English language Workman's Advocate printed only fifty eight letters. Nearly half of these were concerned with the ironworkers, whilst only three dealt with the affairs of coal miners. The pattern was repeated in the following year. Miners' issues, however, continued to be written about by correspondents in the Welsh language Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr. Almost half of the fifty letters printed in that paper during the first five months of its independent existence between August and December 1874 were concerned with the coal miners, as were thirty per cent of all letters printed in the same paper in 1875. However, only two ironworkers wrote letters to the Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr in 1875, three fewer than during the previous four months.

When the results of these three studies of readers' letters are correlated it appears that correspondents were concerned principally with the interests and the affairs of their own occupational groups and trade unions. Generally speaking, the Examiner and the Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr printed the letters of coal miners, whilst the Workman's Advocate carried those of metalworkers and skilled ironwork servicemen such as engineers, firemen, fitters and smiths. Clearly, this pattern mirrored the spectrum of letters submitted more than it did editorial selection.

Many letters, moreover, were written in response to each other, and in this way discussions and debates on issues of considerable importance to both the readers and the editors alike were conducted through the letters' columns, often continuing for weeks at a time. A debate of this kind was conducted in the Examiner over, for example, the resignation of William Brown as miners' agent, and a similar one appeared in the Workman's Advocate over the growth of se-cessionist Red Dragon unionism among the ironworkers. Letters to the Editor, therefore, were as much structured dialogues between correspondents as they were between the correspondents and the editor.

Letters, therefore, were an extremely important element in labour journalism. Their combined effect helped to create the 'social image' of the respective newspapers, and conveyed the impression that the Owen and the Morgan papers genuinely did express local working class opinions.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### FINANCE

During a large part of the period under study, newspapers were commonly individual or family properties. Capital involved in their establishment and maintenance need not have been considerable, and, according to one Royal Commission on the Press, if losses were incurred 'they were on a scale which a man of moderate fortune could afford'.<sup>1</sup> The Rev. George Dawson, for example, was prepared to contribute sufficient capital to help launch Cattell's Radical Times in 1876 despite the loss of a hefty investment in the radical Birmingham Daily Press at the time of its collapse in 1858. Throughout the 1860's and 1870's, however, newspaper enterprises became gradually more industrialised and commercialised as techniques of news gathering, printing and distributing became more sophisticated. Taxation and direct state control of the press having been repealed, the pressures of the free market brought their own problems to the editors and proprietors of small-circulation papers. The 1860's and 1870's, therefore, witnessed considerable changes in the production of newspapers, changes which, on the whole militated very strongly against the survival of explicitly working class local newspapers.

Little direct evidence pertains to the precise capital and cost structures of such local working class newspapers. Many were registered not with the Board of Trade as Limited Companies, but with the Registrar of Friendly Societies as Industrial and Provident Societies. Consequently, no details of shareholders, their occupations and their investments over a prolonged period of time are to be found from these sources. Friendly Societies or Industrial and Provident Societies Instruments of Dissolution do provide some information concerning shareholders, assets and liabilities,

1. Royal Commission on the Press 1947 - 1949, (1949), p.14.

but only those which were valid on the actual date of the Societies' dissolution. In the absence of specific information of this kind from official sources, the reasonable assumption has been made in the analysis of the economics of the working class press which follows that both the constant and variable capitals of the industry were approximately similar in scale for local newspaper concerns of like dimensions whether they be classified as local working class newspapers or not. Working upon this assumption it is possible to reconstruct aspects of the aggregate expenditure and income structure of some working class newspapers.

i) Expenditure.

Plant and Raw Materials.

The purchasing of adequate printing facilities formed the single most important item of expenditure. Many smaller newspapers relied solely on contracting their printing work out to local printers, often at considerable cost. The Manchester City News, for example, spent up to forty six per cent of their total expenditure bill on printing and composition costs, the rates in Manchester between 1865 and 1868 being of the order of £19 or £20 for six thousand to six thousand five hundred copies of newsprint.<sup>2</sup> Possession of private printing works, however, reduced the financial burden of newspaper production once the initial capital outlay had been completed. Private printing facilities also allowed for the making of additional income through general printing or 'jobbing', and gave the editor greater last minute supervision over the contents of each edition.

Providing that sufficient capital could be raised and that the proprietor made an intelligent choice of machinery, in keeping with the general expectations of the paper's circulation and print order, the cost of buying basic printing machinery was not out of the reach of the small newspaper entrepreneur. H. Yeo advised that 'Newspapers with limited circulations should consider twice before rushing into unknown expenditure', and that'

2. A.J.Lee, 'The Management of a Victorian Local Newspaper : the Manchester City News 1864 - 1910', Business History 15, 1973, p.135.

for an ordinary paper, with a limited circulation, one of Dawson's or Payne's "Wharfedales" should suffice'.<sup>3</sup> With this type of equipment, Yeo continued, 'the expenditure is far less, and for the general run of weeklies the machines are quite up to what is required. The cost of working is materially less than that of a web, and, in short runs, a paper has every opportunity of getting out fairly well on time...'.<sup>4</sup> According to the Provincial Typographical Circular of January 1877 it was possible to purchase a complete printing plant, consisting of printing machine, engine and boiler for the production of a four pages newspaper the size of the Times for £300, and for the production of a similar sized eight paged paper for £450. Purchased separately new printing machines cost from £20 to £354, the most easily available machines in 1876 being the following:

Table 13.

<u>New Printing Machines</u>	<u>Price (September 1876)</u>	£ 5
'Wharfedale' 65 x 45 'Monster'	350	
'Wharfedale' 54 x 42 with flyer	354	
'Wharfedale' 48 x 36	288	
Double Royal 'Wharfedale' with flyer	222	
Double Demy 'Wharfedale'	183	
Double Demy 'Reliance' with flyer	183	
Double Crown	159	
Double Crown 'Wharfedale' with flyer	159	
Demy 'Wharfedale' with flyer	125	
Demy 'Reliance'	125	
Crown 'Otley'	65	
Crown 'Otley' with flyer	75	
Demy - Folio 'Northumbria'	58	
Demy - Folio with flyer, treadle action	65	

3. H. Yeo, Newspaper Management . (1891), pp. 29-30.

4. *ibid.* p.30.

5. Provincial Typographical Circular September 1876.

Foolscap - Folio 'Northumbria'	44
No. 2 'Liberty'	48
No. 3 'Liberty'	65
No. 4 'Liberty'	85
The 'Little Tumbler'	20

Engines and boilers to drive these letterpress and lithographic printing machines, moreover, ranged in price during the mid - 1870's from £50 for a one house boiler to £95 for an engine with a four house boiler.<sup>6</sup>

In 1871 a new newspaper and general printing works were opened in Hanley, its principal object being to print Owen's Potteries Examiner. The machines used, however, were not adequate to the task of printing the whole of the paper, and half of the Potteries Examiner continued to be printed at a London office until May 1873.<sup>7</sup> During the previous year, Owen had initiated a fund raising drive to raise between £700 and £900 towards the cost of purchasing and installing a new 'Wharfedale' printing machine at his editorial office, 58 Hope Street Hanley.<sup>8</sup> Sufficient revenue having been raised by the following spring the new 'Wharfedale', printing three thousand copies per hour, was installed at the Hope Street office and began printing the whole of the Potteries Examiner in the one place.<sup>9</sup> Within two years, however, Owen had established new printing works in his Black Country office at 28 Marget Street, Wolverhampton. Like Owen, Morgan also began to print newspapers off his own stock, from 1871 onwards. Similarly, Aberdare's Tarian y Gweithiwr was from 1875 printed privately by its proprietors and editors, principally John Mills and Francis Lynch, both of whom were printers by trade.<sup>10</sup> The printing of the Birmingham Radical Times, however, appears to have been contracted out to a private,

6. *ibid.* October 1876.

7. Potteries Examiner 2 November 1872. Previous to the acquisition of the Hope Street Works, the Potteries Examiner was printed privately by Thomas Bayley, Red Lion Square, Newcastle under Lyme, *ibid.* 17 Mar. '71.

8. *ibid.* 10 May 1873.

9. *ibid.* 10 May 1873.

10. Tarian y Gweithiwr 15 January 1875.

though doubtless sympathetic, printer, William Payne, Vauxhall Street, Birmingham.<sup>11</sup> Unlike basic plant, ink and newsprint were items which required continuous expenditure. Jobbing ink in 1876 cost six, eight, nine or twelve shillings per dozen cases, whilst fine rolling ink for newspaper printing sold at ten shillings per dozen cases. Book printing ink was dearer, ranging in price from eighteen shillings to £3 for the finest 'blue black'.<sup>12</sup> Newsprint for the Manchester Daily News, one of the very few provincial newspapers to have retained prolonged and detailed records of expenditure, cost an average of £13 per week in the years 1866, 1867 and 1868.<sup>13</sup> Upon this basis a weekly paper of similar size and circulation would require to spend over £2 each week on newsprint. Due to the dearth of reliable sources, however, it is not possible to construct a detailed and analytical model of the expenditure of the Owen-Morgan groups of working class newspapers. Nevertheless, it may be of some value to study the cost structure of other provincial newspapers, particularly with reference to the ways in which money was spent upon different items. Thus, a glance at the expenditure over one six month period of the Gwalia Newspaper and Printing Company gives an indication of the proportion of total expenditure devoted to specific items.

Table 14.

<u>Revenue Account for year ending 31 March</u> <u>1886 of the Gwalia Newspaper and Printing</u> <u>Co.Ltd.</u>	£.	s.	d.
To Salaries and Wages	1007	19	3
Rents, Rates, Taxes and Gas	195	2	9½
Paper, Coal and Material	1022	16	3
Rail Carriage and Postage	430	18	0
Carriage of parcels, Bookbinding and bill posting	93	19	9

11. Radical Times 18 November 1876.

12. Provincial Tynographical Circular July 1876.

13. A.J.Lee, 'The Management...', op.cit., p.147.

Revenue Account for year ending 31 March<sup>14</sup>  
1866 of the Gwalia Newspaper and Printing  
Co. Ltd., (Continued).

	£.	s.	d.	
Repairs to premises	38	3	9	
Bank Charges and Insurance	40	1	9	
Legal Expenses	75	0	0	
Travelling Expenses,	98	15	11	
Stationery, Printing, Newspapers, Miscellaneous charges	120	9	11	
Bad debts written off	98	13	8½	
Discounts and allowances made	264	18	8½	
Depreciation on Plant, say 5%	68	12	0	
Balance to General Balance Sheet	16	13	5½	
Total	£3582	5	3	14

Gwalia, of course, was a very different kind of paper from those published by Owen and Morgan. It was Conservative, and enjoyed a circulation, though not by all accounts a large one, throughout the Principality of Wales. It is instructive, however, to note that the highest single item of expenditure with the exception of 'Paper, Coal and Material' was labour.

Labour Costs.

For working class newspapers also labour costs were an important, and problematic, area for concern. Wages in the printing industry varied within regions, towns, even newspapers, but in 1850 most compositors working in the major provincial towns earned a basic wage of between twenty one and twenty five shillings for a fifty four hour week.<sup>15</sup> From 1868 a new wages scale was introduced which specified firstly that time work was to be paid at ten pence per hour on weekly papers, subject to the extras for overtime

14. Report of the Directors to the Shareholders at the 4th Annual Ordinary Meeting, 12 June 1886, Picton Castle Coll. 4829, N.L.W.

15. Typographical Protection Circular February 1850; E. Howe, The London Compositor. Documents relating to wages, working conditions and Customs of the London Printing Trade 1785-1910, (1947), pp.305-6.

worked after the sixty hour norm, secondly that the minimum established jobbing rates, or 'stab, was to be fixed at thirty six shillings for a fifty four hour week, overtime to be paid at not less than eleven pence per hour, and finally that the compositors on piece work were to work a maximum of fifty four hours per week.<sup>16</sup> The Forty Third Half-Yearly Report of the Provincial Typographical Association for the half year ending 31 December 1870 illustrates clearly the regional variations of the 1868 wage scale in six towns where labour newspapers were, or were about to be, published and printed.

Table 15.

Wage Rates in the Printing Industry

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Town</u>					
	Birm- ingham	Darl- ington	Merthyr	Pott- eries	Leam- ington	Wolver- hampton.
<u>Wages</u>						
Jobbing	26s	25s	21s	26s	21s	25s
Weekly News	30s	25s	21s	-	24s	27s
Daily News	40s	35s	-	-	-	-
<u>News Piece Prices</u> ( <u>Per Hour</u> )						
<u>Weekly</u>						
Brevier	7d	5½d	-	6d	-	6d
Minion	7d	5½d	4½d	6d	-	6½d
Nonpl.	8½d	5½d	-	7d	-	7d
<u>Daily</u>						
Brevier	7½d	6½d	-	-	-	-
Minion	7½d	7d	-	-	-	-
Nonpl.	9½d	7½d	-	-	-	-

16. E.Howe, The London Compositor..., op.cit, pp. 454-5.

Table 15. (Continued).

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Town</u>					
	Birm- ingham	Darl- ington	Merthyr	Pott- eries	Leam- ington	Wolver- hampton.
<u>Hours Worked</u>						
<u>Per Week.</u>						
Jobbing	35	58	59	58	59	59
Weekly News	54	58	59	-	57	59
Daily News	50	56	-	-	-	-
<u>Overtime</u>						
<u>(Per Hour)</u>						
Jobbing	6	6	5	6	6	6
Weekly News	9	6	5	-	6	6
Daily News	10	12	-	-	-	-

Joseph Gould, printer of the Miners' Advocate and Record and previously a member of the London Society of Compositors, estimated in two separate reports the average wage rates of provincial compositors in the years 1876 and 1878.

Table 16.                      Compositor wage rates 1876 and 1878                      18

<u>Town</u>	<u>'stab (s)</u>		<u>piece rate (d)</u>		<u>hours worked</u>	
	<u>1876</u>	<u>1878</u>	<u>1876</u>	<u>1878</u>	<u>1876</u>	<u>1878</u>
Birmingham	30	30	7½	7½	54	54
Bristol	28	-	6½	-	54	-
Cardiff	27	29	5	6½	54	54
Glasgow	20	32/6	-	7	54	54

17. Forty Third Half-Yearly Report of the Provincial Typographical Association, for the Half-Year ending 31 December 1870, (1871), p.4.

18. J.Gould, The Letter Press Printer, (1876), p.163; J.Gould, Compositor's Guide and Pocket Book, (1878), p.75.



Table 16 (Continued)

Town	<u>'stab(s)</u>		<u>piece rate (d)</u>		<u>hours worked</u>	
	<u>1876</u>	<u>1878</u>	<u>1876</u>	<u>1878</u>	<u>1876</u>	<u>1878</u>
Manchester	35	35	7½	7½	55	55
Middlesbrough	30	28	6½	6½	54	54
Merthyr	23	-	-	-	57	-
Newcastle	32	-	6½	-	54	-
Potteries	28	-	7	-	54	-
Stafford	32	-	5½	-	54	-
Leamington	25	-	6½	-	54	-
Wolverhampton	27	29	6½	6½	54	54
Darlington	-	28	-	6	-	53

(Note: Leamington includes Leamington and Warwick District).

By comparing tables 15 and 16 with the 1868 basic scale the trend of compositors' wage rates may be seen to be one of increase, particularly from 1870 to 1876, followed by stagnation or even in some areas a slight decrease up to 1878. These rates were negotiated, both nationally and locally, and maintained, at least in 'fair' houses, by the Provincial Typographical Association. This printer's trade union had members and branches in each town in which there were Labour newspapers during the 1860's and 1870's, with the exception of the Potteries between 1864 and 1866 when the branch went into temporary decline.<sup>19</sup> and Aberdare and Merthyr from September 1876 when members seceded, according to the Provincial Typographical Circular, because of their 'unwillingness to contribute the small subscription required of them to support union principles'.<sup>20</sup> Membership of the Provincial Typographical Association also fluctuated in other towns, as the following table demonstrates.

19. Provincial Typographical Association: Minutes of Executive Council, University of Warwick Modern Records Centre MSS 39A/TA/1/5, pp.224-232.

20. Provincial Typographical Circular September 1876, p.5.

Table 17.Membership of the Provincial Typographical Association, February 1873 and December 1876.

21

<u>Branch</u>	<u>Number of Members</u>	
	<u>February 1873</u>	<u>December 1876</u>
Birmingham	324	268
Bristol	110	119
Middlesbrough	18	12
Potteries	25	63
Stafford	22	18
Walsall	-	23
Leamington	32	33
Wolverhampton	40	37

The above table, however, does not illustrate the full extent of compositor migration or the movement of members from branch to branch during the intervening years. An indication of the membership turnover of individual branches may be given by the number of documents issued in each of the above named branches of the Provincial Typographical Association between February 1873 and December 1876.

Table 18.Number of Documents issued between February 1873 and December 1876.

22

<u>Branch</u>	
Birmingham	103
Bristol	25
Middlesbrough	12
Potteries	36
Stafford	15

21. *ibid.* May 1877, p.10.22. *ibid.*

Table 18 (Continued)Number of Documents issued between  
February 1873 and December 1876.Branch

Walsall	7
Leamington	39
Wolverhampton	31

Proprietors and managers of working class newspapers were also required to adhere to the Rules of the Provincial Typographical Association (P.T.A.) concerning apprenticeships and the operation of Society shops. In the Potteries it had been agreed in 1866 that minimum wages were to be fixed at twenty four shillings, and the maximum working week at fifty eight hours. The local branch of the P.T.A. was also adamant on the issue of the employment of non-Society labour and the excessive introduction of apprentices - two were considered sufficient for most of the printing shops of Hanley.<sup>23</sup> A list provided by Joseph Ashton gives an indication of the size of the industry in the Potteries in 1866.

Table 19.Men and Apprentices in Potteries Printing Works.  
1866.

24

<u>Area</u>	<u>Printer(s)</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Apprentices</u>
Hanley	Sentinel	7	5
	Albert and Daniel	8	4
	Keat and Ford	4	3
	Turners	1	1
Burslem	Turners	1	2 (both unbound)
	Bowrings	1	2
	Dean	1	2
	Cowper	2	1 (unbound)

23. Provincial Typographical Association : Report Book of Deputations, p. 215, MSS 39A/TA/7/DEP/1.

24. *ibid.* p.85.

Table 19 (Continued).Men and Apprentices in Potteries Printing Works 1866.

<u>Area</u>	<u>Printer(s)</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Apprentices</u>
Tunstall	Tomkinson	1	-
	Shaw	1	2 (both unbound)
Stoke	Mrs. Wortley	1	1
	Turner	1	1
Newcastle	Dilworth	2	2
	Crewe	3	2

In each of the areas where working class newspapers were published, therefore, typographical workers were relatively strongly unionised. Moreover, through the recorded struggles of provincial compositors it is possible to approach such editors as Owen and Morgan not as 'workmen's advocates' but as employers of labour. Printers employed by these men were notoriously cynical of their employers' methods and intentions, and there is no evidence to suggest that they enjoyed a special or particularly enlightened relationship with their editors and managers. During a bitter dispute over the introduction of new apprentices at the Staffordshire Sentinel offices in 1869, it was pointed out by one striking compositor that

'the only newspaper published in the Potteries besides the Sentinel was the Potteries Examiner, which announces on its title that it is - "Devoted to the interests of labour", yet it is printed in a closed office at Newcastle, with an unlimited number of boys'.<sup>25</sup>

The problem of reconciling their trade unionist proclivities and aspirations with their status as employers remained with editors and managers of working class newspapers throughout the period. In June 1873,

25. *ibid.*

for example, Owen and the Staffordshire<sup>\*</sup> Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society clashed with the local branch of the P.T.A. over the employment of a non society printer. Bury, previously of the Worcester Advertiser, had been engaged by Owen in spite of the fact that he possessed no society document. Consequently, other P.T.A. members employed at the Potteries Examiner office refused to work with the newcomer and demanded his exclusion from the office. Owen and the 'board of directors, which consisted mainly of trades unionists',<sup>26</sup> protested against the harshness of the branch decision and appealed directly to the General Council of the P.T.A., warning that unless they arrived at a firm decision on the matter by 23 June, the Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society would be obliged to reinstate the printer in question. The P.T.A. inquiry which followed found that Bury had left the Birmingham branch of the Association in 1867 owing six shillings and eight pence to the P.T.A., had rejoined in London, but had left again in December 1872 having fallen heavily into arrears. Consequently, the General Council advised the Potteries branch to admit Bury into the P.T.A. and the Potteries Examiner office on payment of a suitable fine. Owen, however, by this time, had capitulated to the demands of the local branch and had dismissed the compositor.<sup>27</sup>

A considerably more serious dispute occurred during the autumn of 1874. Printers of the Potteries Examiner had been expressing their dissatisfaction over overtime pay for some time, and claimed later to have submitted a request for an additional five pence per hour on their piece earnings when called upon to work later than seven in the evenings but had received no reply from the directors of the Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society. Returning late one Wednesday evening from a reporting journey in September 1874, Owen insisted that the remaining printers set up a letter which had appeared in the London papers on the

26. P.T.A.: Minutes of General Council p. 314 MSS 39A/TA/1/6/1.

27. *ibid.* p.315.

previous day for publication in the following issue of the Potteries Examiner. The printers protested that they ought to have been given the letter at an earlier hour and, having resolved to disobey Owen's instructions, were each delivered with a fortnight's notice. The severity of the ultimatum called for the direct intervention in the dispute of the General Council of the P.T.A., a member of which was sent to the Potteries to inquire into the cause of the dispute. Although critical of the printers involved for not having discussed their course of action with their local P.T.A. branch before precipitating the dispute, and warning them that in consequence of their over hasty action they did not qualify for the P.T.A.'s compensation for dismissal, the P.T.A. nonetheless attempted to persuade Owen to reinstate the sacked printers. Owen, however, whilst agreeing to take some of the dismissed printers back into his employment, insisted that the new printers taken on to replace those under notice would be retained at his office. Owen's comment on the dispute was that there were no obstacles to prevent workers approaching the Committee at any time, and that 'the company were quite willing to conform to the branch rules with regard to prices and hours'.<sup>28</sup>

During Matthias's editorship of the Potteries Examiner there were no problems of labour relations, at least not ones serious enough to be reported to the General Council of the P.T.A. or to their deputations. In April 1876 Matthias was invited to attend a function organised by the P.T.A. to celebrate the anniversary of the local Association in the Potteries. Matthias addressed the gathering at some length, and toasted the 'Newspaper Press'.<sup>29</sup> Soon after Matthias's departure from the editorship, however, his successors again involved the paper in a clash with the P.T.A. In September 1878 William Yeomans, a shareholder of the Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society,<sup>30</sup> overseer of the Potteries Examiner office, both news and jobbing sections, and secretary of the potteries branch

28. P.T.A. : Report, op.cit, p.469, MSS 39A/TA/DEP/1; P.T.A.: Minutes op.cit., pp. 78-0, MSS 39A/TA/1/7/1.

29. Potteries Examiner 8 April 1876.

30. Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society, Instrument of Dissolution op.cit., FS8/29/1426.

of the P.T.A. since May 1868,<sup>31</sup> was dismissed from his post. The new proprietors, Barker and Platt, explained that the firm intended to reduce the cost of producing the paper by employing fewer men and more boys. Visiting the Potteries Examiner office in September 1878 the Assistant Secretary of the P.T.A. found that Barker and Platt 'professed admiration of trade unionism, but thought their inelastic nature was a great defect',<sup>32</sup> clearly a reference to the P.T.A. rules on apprenticeship. The proprietors argued that major economies were necessary for at least three months, at the end of which they would be glad to return the office to the existing system. It was stated privately to the Assistant Secretary that the three months period alluded to was believed to have some reference to the proprietors' plan of resistance to an imminent threat from Ahmed Kenealy to 'damage the character of the paper' and to 'turn it into a Conservative organ'.<sup>33</sup> By October, however, no further steps had been taken by the proprietors to substitute apprentices for men, but Yeomans, the overseer who had led the opposition to the introduction of more apprentices, was not reinstated. To mark their recognition of his services to the union, the P.T.A. awarded him an honorarium of £25, after receiving which Yeomans proceeded to establish his own printing works in Hanley.<sup>34</sup>

In the same year Owen also faced fresh difficulties at his office in Wolverhampton. On 23 August 1878 printers at the Midland Daily Echo and Wolverhampton Times had issued a warning that there would be strong opposition to the proposed reduction in piece rates of between twenty and forty per cent. By the end of August, however, the dispute had been averted by the resignation of Spencer from the proprietorship. The latter had 'wished the office to be made a non-society one',<sup>35</sup> a request which Owen had resolutely refused to grant. Spencer, however, was replaced by a no less controversial character. James Brooke, previously of the

31.P.T.A.: Minutes op.cit., p.55 MSS 39A/TA/1/5/1.

32.ibid. p. 273, MSS 39A/TA/1/8.

33.ibid, p.277.

34.ibid.

35.ibid. pp. 255-6

Staffordshire Chronicle and sometime adversary of the P.T.A. was appointed overseer of the works to the surprise of the members of the branch'.<sup>36</sup>

Despite his promise that the office should continue to be 'fairly conducted',<sup>37</sup> Brooke remained a deeply distrusted man, and each of his numerous attempts to be admitted into the P.T.A., were rejected by both the local branch and the General Council.<sup>38</sup>

Morgan faced similar problems of labour relations at his Workman's Advocate printing office in Merthyr Tydfil. Initially, Morgan found no difficulty in encouraging trade unionism amongst his printing staff. In April 1874 he publicly supported a printers' strike over a claim for a three shillings per week wage increase. Merthyr's printers requested a meeting with their employers at the Globe Inn, Merthyr, during the first week of April 1874, but in the event only Morgan attended to represent the town's employers of printers, whereupon he was invited to chair the meeting. 'Irrespective of the attitude of other Master Printers',<sup>39</sup> Morgan promptly conceded the advance to his own printers. The claim was, however, rejected by Southey of the Merthyr Express, Joseph Williams of the Tyst a'r Dydd, Peter Williams of the Merthyr Telegraph and Rees Lewis of Y Fellten, although the strike did not adversely affect the production of their respective newspapers.

Within a year, however, Morgan's relations with his workers and the local branch of the P.T.A. had noticeably deteriorated. In May 1875 Morgan brought legal action against one of his own employees, J.R. Evans (Ioan Egwest), a typesetter and translator at the Workman's Advocate office. Unexpectedly, Morgan charged Evans with negligence under a clause of the Masters and Servants Act. Morgan, however, lost the action. Predictably Morgan's use of this controversial law outraged both the P.T.A. and many

36. *ibid.* p.256.

37. *ibid.*

38. *ibid.* pp. 224,250,341,362,365; MSS 39A/TA/9/1 p.30.

39. Workman's Advocate 4 April 1874.



local radicals. A bitter exchange of letters followed between Evans, Morgan and Mills in the pages of Tarian y Gweithiwr in which accusations were made by both parties which were not publicly substantiated.<sup>40</sup>

On 29 May 1875 the Executive Council of the Provincial Typographical Association received copies of correspondence between 'Mr. J.T.Morgan, editor and prop. of the Workman's Advocate and Sec. of the Merthyr and Dowlais Trades Council... and the branch sec. (of the P.T.A.) respecting the conduct of his office'.<sup>41</sup> In his letter to the local branch of the P.T.A. Morgan complained that 'he was unfairly treated and challenged investigation into his conduct'.<sup>42</sup> In June 1875, however, Evans' colleagues at the Workman's Advocate office, Thomas Thomas, David Hamer and Shadrach Jenkins, wrote a joint letter to the Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr exonerating Morgan from the accusations made against him and supporting his course of action against Evans.<sup>43</sup>

Morgan's refusal to comply with P.T.A. rules, however, continued to anger the local branch. On 17 and 18 June 1875 a Deputation from the P.T.A.'s Executive Council interviewed all parties at the Workman's Advocate office. From the Merthyr branch of the P.T.A. the Deputation learned that 'Mr. Morgan had at the present time three bound apprentices and two journeymen, one of whom was a non member, having been one of those who came out of another office on strike in the spring of 1874, but subsequently refusing to pay a fine of 2/6 for neglect of work, he had worked for a short time in a closed office, and afterwards in that of Mr. Morgan'.<sup>44</sup> The Deputation found, moreover, that among the members of the local branch of the P.T.A. 'there appeared strong indications that personal antipathy to Mr. Morgan was felt by many ...'<sup>45</sup> Information given to the Deputation

40. Tarian y Gweithiwr 14 May 1875.

41. P.T.A.: Report op.cit., p.191, MSS 39A/TA/1/7/1.

42. *ibid.*

43. Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr 12 June 1875.

44. P.T.A.: Report op.cit., p.499, MSS 39A/TA/7/DEP/1.

45. *ibid.*

concerning Morgan's office were, however, 'emphatically contradicted by the member (of the P.T.A.) working in the office, who stated that only 2 apprentices were employed in the office, though it was true that three were bound, but one of these had left the business!'<sup>46</sup> The same member also told the deputation 'that it was not Mr. Morgan's wish to employ non-union men, and that he had never done so when the branch could supply him with suitable men. This was contradicted by the officials, who said Mr. Morgan had not applied for men'.<sup>47</sup> It was, however, admitted that in Morgan's office overtime was paid half more per hour than in other offices'.<sup>48</sup>

The following day the Deputation, accompanied by Mr. Griffiths, a branch representative, interviewed Morgan himself about the accusations levelled against him. At this interview Morgan

'affirmed his belief that there was a combination among the employers to injure him, and that some of the members of the branch were aiding them. He had heard a rumour circulated that his office was to be closed, though no complaint was made to him about it, and this he thought unfair treatment.....He complained that he had applied to the branch treasurer for a man when one was unemployed in the town, but the latter had not been informed of it, and altogether he seemed to think that there was a set against him in the branch who were determined, if possible, to have his office closed'.<sup>49</sup>

The P.T.A. representatives, however, replied that no 'responsible officer of the branch had any part in circulating this rumour',<sup>50</sup> and assured Morgan that 'no such intention as this could be countenanced by the Association'.<sup>51</sup>

46. *ibid.*

47. *ibid.*

48. *ibid.* p.502.

49. *ibid.* p.499.

50. *ibid.*

51. *ibid.*

Morgan, in reply to the specific charges brought against him by the local branch, in turn assured them that 'he had always aimed to employ union men only, but that he could not compel men to join. He had also always complied with the branch rules, and in the matter of apprentices had only infringed the rule through ignorance'.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, in July 1875 Morgan wrote to the Executive Council of the P.T.A. to inform them that Hamer, the non-society compositor referred to in the branch allegations and one of the signatories of the joint defence of Morgan of 12 June 1875, 'had refused to comply with the terms of the branch for his admission, and had since left his employ'.<sup>53</sup> A replacement, Morgan promised, would be found from among society members, and 'the apprenticeship rule should be observed in his office',<sup>54</sup> henceforth.

#### ii) Income.

#### Nominal Capital and the Social Composition of Investors.

With some notable exceptions the founders of working class newspapers attempted to raise revenue for the initial capital outlay on machinery, materials, labour, rents and so forth by forming limited companies or Industrial and Provident Societies. These companies and Societies may be contrasted to those of more orthodox newspaper concerns in two major ways. Firstly, they aimed at much lower levels of capital investment, and secondly, the social composition of their investors and the mean quantity and value of shares held by individual investors were considerably more modest. The Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society Ltd., printers of the Potteries Examiner and the early editions of the Labour Press Examiners, was established in 1871 with the object of selling two thousand shares at ten shillings each, thus raising £1,000 to cover the early basic costs of the new concern. By July 1871, however, only £700's worth of shares had been purchased,<sup>55</sup> and at the time of the Society's dissolution in 1878 share

52. *ibid.*

53. P.T.A.: Minutes op.cit. p. 201, MSS 39A/TA/1/7/1.

54. *ibid.*

55. Potteries Examiner 29 July 1871.

capital remained marginally under the £1,000 level at £921. 7. 9.<sup>56</sup>

A local rival of the Potteries Examiner, the Staffordshire Sentinel also operated a private printing company, the Staffordshire Sentinel Printing and Publishing Company Limited. This Company, however, was established in 1858 with £5,000 worth of shares having previously been purchased at the relatively high price of £5 each.<sup>57</sup>

A similar situation prevailed in Merthyr Tydfil where in late 1875 Morgan's Labour Press, Industrial and Provident Society made available for sale shares at a nominal value of £1 each. In order to root the Society in the local institutions of labour in South Wales Morgan indicated that individual members could purchase no more than one share each, whilst trade unions and other societies and associations could buy one share per one hundred members. All shares were payable at the rate of one shilling per week, with a fine of one shilling per quarter for non-payment.<sup>58</sup> The

newspaper printed by this society, the Star of the West, successor to the Workman's Advocate and Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr, survived for only six issues, which suggests strongly that a minimum capital was not raised.

In contrast to the methods of capital raising adopted by the Labour Press Industrial and Provident Society, a contemporary Liberal Merthyr newspaper the Merthyr Express established its own printing company, the Merthyr Newspaper Company in July 1864, having issued £800's worth of £1 shares previous to its registration. Soon after launching the Merthyr Express with this capital, however, H.W. Southey, editor of the Merthyr Express, dissolved the company in May of the following year and continued the paper as an individual concern.<sup>59</sup>

In further contrast to Morgan's attempt to transform his individual newspaper enterprise into a public concern,

Aberdare's labour newspaper, Tarian y Gweithiwr, remained firmly under the control, management and ownership of the co-founder John Mills from its

56. Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society, Rules, pp. 5-6, P.R.O. DS8/29/1426.

57. Staffordshire Sentinel Printing and Publishing Company Ltd., P.R.O. BT 31/385/1433.

58. Labour Press, Industrial and Provident Society, Rules, FSS/38/1934 p.2.

59. H.W. Southey to Chief Registrar 12 December 1881, BT31/982/1448c, (The Merthyr Telegraph was also continued as an individual enterprise until the formation of the Merthyr Telegraph Printing Co.Ltd. in March 1907; BT31/11892/9252).

establishment in 1875 to 1895, whereupon it was transferred to Mr. Gwilym Evans who later disposed of it to the Tarian Printing Company.<sup>60</sup> As Y Darian the paper was continued until September 1934.

In Birmingham the Radical Times was established in 1876 under the aegis of the Co-operative Newspaper Company Limited. By the date of the first issue of the paper 1,000 shares at £1 each were being offered for sale to potential investors payable at the rate of five shillings on application, a further five shillings on allotment and the remainder to be called up at the discretion of the Financial Committee.<sup>61</sup> It is certainly indicative of the weakness of its financial support that these shares were still being offered for sale in eleven successive issues of the Radical Times until its dissolution in February 1877. A more orthodoxly Liberal newspaper, the West Bromwich Free Press, was relaunched in 1876 with a basic capital of £1000 divided into shares of £10 each by the West Bromwich Free Press Company Limited.<sup>62</sup> Contrast these two relatively modest basic or nominal capitals with that of the Wolverhampton and Midland Newspaper Company Limited, established in 1880 with a nominal capital of £10,000 divided into shares of £10 each.<sup>63</sup>

Similarly in London, working class printing companies were established with considerably lower amounts of nominal capital than that which was made available to their more prestigious contemporaries. The Beehive, for example, produced by the Trades Newspaper Company Limited, was supported by a nominal capital of £1,250 divided into 5,000 shares at five shillings each.<sup>64</sup> The Labour News and Employment Advertiser Company on the other hand was started in 1874 with capital amounting to £5,000 in shares prices at £5 each,<sup>65</sup> whilst the short-lived Newspaper Company Limited (1874 - 1878) was inaugurated with a share capital of £100,000 priced at £10 each.<sup>66</sup>

60. Y Darian 19 January 1915; Western Mail 19 October 1925.

61. Radical Times 18 November 1876.

62. West Bromich Free Press Co.Ltd. BT31/2178/10172.

63. Wolverhampton and Midland Newspaper Co.Ltd. BT31/2628/13935.

64. S.Coltham, 'George Potter and the Bee-Hive Newspaper', (Unpub. D.Phil., Oxford 1956), p.51.

65. Labour News and Employment Advertiser Co., BT 31/1923/7933.

66. Newspaper Company Limited BT 31/2041/8887.

Substantial differences in the quantity of money made available by investors to working class and other newspaper enterprises are also reflected in the quantities of shares held by individual investors and in the social composition of those investors. The contrast between the concentrated wealth which lay behind the larger popular newspaper companies and the smaller share units of working class companies and Societies is a particularly striking one which deserves closer comparative examination. Shares in the Newspaper Company Limited in March 1875 were held by eight solicitors, seven clergymen, three barristers at law, a parliamentary agent, the proprietor Mr. A. Mackie, a reporter, an editor, an accountant and a clerk.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, the Labour News and Employment Advertiser Company Limited was financed by the shareholdings of five barristers at law, three gentlemen, two clerks in Holy Orders, a merchant, a wharfinger, a captain R.A., a ship owner and a worsted manufacturer. The average number of shares held by each was 28.7, including three investors who held between forty and one hundred and forty one shares in April 1874.<sup>68</sup>

In contrast, the Industrial Newspaper Company Limited was supported by seventy eight shareholders, the average number of shares held by each investor being only six, with fifty holding only one or two shares, and only eight holding twenty or over. The social composition was overwhelmingly working class, including thirteen bricklayers, seven shoemakers, five tailors, four joiners, four artisans, three printers/compositors, three secretaries, two upholsterers, two manufacturers, two barristers, two solicitors, watch-maker, a painter, a hand-rail maker, a hair dresser, a seal engraver, an artist, a carpenter, a merchant, a milkweaver, a pattern-maker, an ironmoulder, a teacher, a plasterer, a coffee house employee, a carver, a publisher, a Dr. of Philosophy and four 'gentlemen'.<sup>69</sup>

A similar pattern is discernible in the financial complexion of provincial newspaper companies and societies. The Staffordshire Sentinel

67. *ibid.* Form E.

68. Labour News and Employment Advertiser Co.Ltd. *op.cit.* Form E.

69. Memorandum of Association, Industrial Newspaper Company Ltd., BT 31/1161/2475c.

Printing and Publishing Company Limited was purchased by Potter in January 1859 from Edward Oswald the Younger for the sum of £600, which was raised by the selling of one hundred and thirty £5 shares. These were purchased by a banker, a brewer, two china manufacturers, a manufacturer, a gentleman and a woollen draper.<sup>70</sup> The Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society Limited, however, consisted of a relatively large number of very small share units. At the date of the Society's dissolution on 21 September 1878 £698. 12.6's worth of shares were held by local trade unions. This sum included £212 held by the Ovenmen, £180.12.6. by various miners' lodges, £150 by the Flat pressers, £90 by the Hollow Ware Pressers, £50 by the Printers and Transferers' Society and £16 by the China Saucer Makers' union. A further £208.6.9. worth of shares were held by forty two individual shareholders, each holding an average number of shares to the value of £4.18.2½. Only six investors possessed shares worth £10 or over.<sup>71</sup> Evidence suggests that Owen faced great difficulty in raising even this small amount of revenue. In April 1871 he issued the following appeal to the organised workers of North Staffordshire:

'The Examiner can never progress beyond what it is, or become firmly established unless on the basis that is now proposed, viz., the workmen owning their own printing company. In looking at the general printing part of the business, who can deny, that is at all acquainted with it, that it will greatly help to support the paper, while the paper will conduce to its success, and what is best of all, the working men themselves, who belong to the enterprise have the power to ensure that success by their own patronage. The general council of the Company will meet on the 24th of this month to finally appoint the necessary officers and managing

70. Staffordshire Sentinel Printing and Publishing Co.Ltd., BT 31/385/1433. Having purchased the Company and the stock, Potter dissolved the Company in 1860 'owing to non success', and continued it as an independent proprietor (Potter to Registrar of Joint Stock Companies, 31 July 1871, *ibid.*).

71. Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society Ltd., Instrument of Dissolution, P.R.O. FE8/29/1426.

committee, and in the meantime the temporary committee are only waiting for the trades and members of trades to take out about £150 worth of shares more to begin the printing of the Examiner in Hanley. Of this more than £60 can readily be obtained, or is promised by those who are quite certain to pay whenever the money is really required, so that it is only about £100 of new shares that are wanted to launch the concern. Among the four thousand trade unionists of the district, that sum ought to be found in a week without the least difficulty. Let the matter be at once brought before every lodge of the potters, miners and ironworkers' societies, and each man be called upon to say what he is willing to invest in the company, and where men cannot take out one or more shares, let them combine together to take out as many shares as they are able. It is both a shame and a reproach to the workingmen of North Stafford that so much indifference should exist on a subject like this. At least, let those men who have agreed to take out shares fulfil the promises voluntarily made. We have waited until now before drawing attention to the coldness that lets one part of this enterprise that is, after all, the most important, wait for want of a few pounds, but can refrain no longer. Prospectuses of the company with a circular requesting each secretary to lay the subject of the co-operative printing company before his lodge will be sent to all the secretaries this week end so that at its next meeting each lodge may be induced to give its help either by investing out of its funds, by shares from the members, or by doing both. Some societies have already done nobly and they cannot



be expected to do more, until others have unloosed their purse strings; but all societies and individuals who have directly promised or in any way intimated their intentions to take out shares, are especially requested to keep their words like creditable associations and honourable men .... The responsibility is great and the courage and energy must be commensurate'.<sup>72</sup>

The financial pattern of Owen's next venture, the North Staffordshire Newspaper Company Limited, publishers of the Daily and Weekly Porslem Mail, however, was noticeably different in character from the Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society Limited. A nominal capital of £5,000 divided into one hundred £5 shares were offered for sale, and the shareholders in September 1881 included a retired manufacturer, five other manufacturers, an agent, a gentleman, solicitor, a schoolmaster, a newspaper editor (William Owen), and a potter. The thirteen shareholders between them possessed shares valued at £1395, at an average holding of 21.5 shares valued at £107.10.0. per shareholder. Owen had invested £600 of his own money in the company.<sup>73</sup> The financial foundations of the North Staffordshire Newspaper Company Limited bore a strong resemblance to those of the Liberal 'Wolverhampton and Midland Newspaper Company Limited', whose forty one shareholders in July 1880 held shares valued at £5000 at an average value of £122 per investor. These investors included representatives of the following occupations: seven merchants, six iron masters, two chemists, two solicitors, a metal broker, an independent minister, a salesman, a commission agent, an Ironworks manager, a hosier, a corn factor, a merchant's clerk; a hatter, a warehouseman, an ironfounder, an engineer, a brassfounder, a medical practitioner and three others with no recorded occupations.<sup>74</sup>

72. Potteries Examiner 7 April 1871.

73. North Staffordshire Newspaper Co.Ltd., Memorandum of Association, P.R.O. BT 31/2795/15286. See Appendix IV.

74. Wolverhampton and Midland Newspaper Co.Ltd. Form E, op.cit.

Owen's subsequent newspaper company, Owen, Goold and Company Limited, similarly aimed at a relatively high capital threshold, offering for sale one thousand shares at £10 each between May 1886 and July 1888 when the Company was dissolved.<sup>75</sup> At the time of the Company's dissolution, however, only eleven shareholders were on record holding a total of four hundred and twenty nine shares. Of these, Owen and Goold held one hundred and fifty each.<sup>76</sup>

The composition of Morgan's newspaper society of 1876 may also be contrasted both to that of local contemporary newspaper concerns and to companies in which Morgan was subsequently involved. The Merthyr Newspaper Company, for example, was owned by sixty two shareholders. In July 1864, these shareholders held five hundred and twenty £1 shares at an average holding of £8.4 each. They included five drapers, six grocers, four solicitors, four travellers, three agents, three chemists, three gentlemen, two secretaries, two schoolmasters, two butchers, two painters, two brewers, two surgeons, a timber merchant, a sergeant, a woollen factor, a cashier, a clerk, musician, an engineer, a chandler, a surveyor, a journalist, a watchmaker, a jeweller, a bootmaker, a confectioner, a roll-turner, a coal proprietor, an innkeeper, a physician and three with no recorded occupation.<sup>77</sup> The Labour Press, Industrial and Benefit Society, however, not being a registered Company, did not disclose information concerning investors and their occupations. Nonetheless, the Star of the West was supported by a formidable collection of local trade unionists. These included Isaac Connick, Merthyr District Miners' Agent; W.R.Jones, Merthyr District Miners' Treasurer, John Williams, Merthyr District Miners' Secretary, Phillip Harries, Merthyr, Ironworkers' Agent for Glamorganshire, Jenkin Thomas, President of the Independent Association of Tin Plate Makers; William Lewis (Lewys Afan), Independent Association of Tin Plate Makers; Miles Davies, General Secretary, National United Association of Enginemen<sup>Firemen</sup> and Fitters; John Fox, General

75. Owen Goold and Co.Ltd., Summary of Capital and Shares, Form E., P.R.O. BT 31/3662/22689.

76. *ibid.*

77. The Merthyr Newspaper Co.Ltd., *op.cit.*

Secretary, Bristol, West of England and South Wales Labourers' Union; Peter Shorrocks, General Secretary, Amalgamated Society of Tailors; William Abraham (Mabon), Loughor District Miners' Agent; Samuel Davies, Aberdare District Miners' Agent; Philip Jones, Abertillery Miners' Agent and James Windsor, President of the Neath District of Miners.<sup>78</sup> In contrast, the social composition of the West Bromwich Free Press Company Limited, of which Morgan became manager in June 1876, consisted of three ironfounders, three managers, two surveyors, a coalmaster, a solicitor, an auctioneer, a schoolmaster, a solicitor's clerk, a coach builder, a grocer, a timber merchant and an agent. Between them these seventeen men held five hundred and fifty £10 shares, an average of £32.3 each in May 1876.<sup>79</sup>

Table 20

Summary of Mean Share Values per Individual Investor.

Limited Company or  
Industrial and Provident  
Society.

Mean Value of Shares held by Individuals  
(Rounded to nearest 10s.)

	£.
Labour News Co.Ltd.	143. 10. 0.
Wolverhampton and Midland Co.Ltd.	122
North Staffordshire Newspaper Co.Ltd.	107. 10. 0.
Staffordshire Sentinel Co.Ltd.	93
West Bromwich Free Press Co.Ltd.	32
Merthyr Newspaper Co.Ltd.	8. 10. 0.
Industrial Newspaper Co.Ltd.	6
Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society Limited	5

Sales, Funds, Loans and Jobbing Income.

Financial returns from sales of newspapers are difficult to assess with any degree of accuracy because of problems implicit in estimating newspaper circulations. Before 1855 and again after the 1930s newspaper

78. Star of the West 15 January 1876.

79. West Bromwich Free Press Co.Ltd. op.cit.

circulation figures from Government sources are plentiful and reliable. Nevertheless, as A.P.Wadsworth suggests

'We can only guess at the circulation of most of them during the period of secrecy between the 1850's and the 1930's. Then all but a few papers jealously guarded the volume of their sales; it was usually much less than was commonly supposed. And now most of their business books have long ago gone for waste paper'.<sup>80</sup>

Even Stamp Returns up to 1870, which in any case would be of limited value with regard to the papers discussed here, were, Wadsworth remarks, 'full of pitfalls'.<sup>81</sup> In 1872 and 1873, however, some circulation figures for the Potteries Examiner do appear in the half-yearly reports of the Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society Limited. They are of more modest dimensions, less rounded and consequently likely to be more accurate than figures given by Owen in Press Directory Advertisements. Acting on this reasonable assumption it is possible to make two calculations, firstly of income from sales in two separate weeks, and secondly of a very approximate mean income over an eighteen month period. The price of the Potteries Examiner was, from 10 June 1871 one and a half pence,<sup>82</sup> although previous to that date the paper had been priced at one penny. Thus income from the sale of two thousand and two hundred copies at a penny each of the Potteries Examiner in the final week of February 1871 would have amounted to £9. 3. 4d, whereas the sale of six thousand, six hundred and fifty copies of the same paper at a penny halfpenny in the week ending 28 September 1872 would have raised Owen's income to £41. 11. 3d. If the growth of circulation was relatively steady between the two dates for which we have reasonably reliable circulation figures, namely February 1871 and September 1872, and

80. A.P.Wadsworth, 'Newspaper Circulations 1800-1954', (Manchester 1955), p.1.

81. *ibid.*, p.2.

82. Potteries Examiner 10 June 1871. The paper was also expanded from four to eight pages from this date onwards.

given that there was no appreciable difference in total circulation figures between late February and early June 1871, we may tentatively estimate a mean weekly financial return from sales over the eighteen month intervening period. Thus a mean weekly circulation of four thousand, four hundred and twenty five copies of the Potteries Examiner between February 1871 and September 1872, at post 10 June 1871 prices, would return a mean figure of £27. 13. 1½ per week sales income. Over the whole eighteen month period, therefore, total income from sales of the Potteries Examiner could have been in the region of £2214. 3. 0d. (at £112. 12. 6d. per month or £339. 17. 6d. per quarter).

In other newspaper enterprises, income from sales of newspapers formed a significant proportion of total income. During the year ending 31 March 1886 sales of the Gwalia raised £1757. 0. 8. for the Gwalia Newspaper and Printing Company Limited. By comparison, advertisements raised only £984. 8. 10d. and general printing £840. 15. 9d. during the same twelve month period.<sup>83</sup>

Both Owen and Morgan, moreover, adopted aggressive sales policies. Owen, for instance, approached 'all Lodge Secretaries' and urged them to bring copies 'of the Examiner before a meeting of 'their respective lodges' with a view of an agent for the sale of the paper being appointed, if such has not already been done, and to encourage the sale of the paper amongst the lodge members'.<sup>84</sup> One Lincolnshire reader urged 'delegates and secretaries' of all trade unions to 'paste the Examiner bills on walls, and get some shops to sell the papers'.<sup>85</sup> Morgan also insisted that the Workman's Advocate and Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr be hawked about the streets of Merthyr and Dowlais, and frequently advertised for 'energetic men' to sell the paper on 'Thursday, Friday and Saturday Evenings'.<sup>86</sup> Partially as a consequence of such policies, Owen claimed that by September 1872 the Staffordshire Co-operative

83. Report of the Directors, Gwalia Newspaper and Printing Company Limited, Pict. on Castle Coll., N.L.W.

84. Forest of Dean Examiner 27 February 1874.

85. Labour Press, Miner and Workmen's Examiner 14 November 1844.

86. Workman's Advocate 2 October 1874.

Newspaper and General Printing Society had made a clear profit of £100, or rather would have made such a profit had not £188. 1. 6<sup>1</sup>d been defrauded from the Society's funds by its treasurer, Thomas Jones in April 1872.<sup>87</sup> By May 1873, however, the Society had incurred a quarterly loss of £45. 13. 4d.<sup>88</sup>

It is apparent that the losses incurred by the Society in late 1872 and early 1873 were kept at an artificially low level by an aggressive fund drive. Instigated in June 1872 to defend Owen and the Potteries Examiner against four charges of libel brought by Barlow and Hulse, Mayor and Presiding Magistrate of Longton, the fund was continued for many months after the trial was ended. The trial was held in Gloucester Assizes on 20 August 1872. Hulse withdrew his case against Owen, and Barlow abandoned one of the four counts of libel brought against Owen. Eventually the plaintiff, Barlow, was awarded damages of £50, and not £2,000 as had been expected,<sup>89</sup> as Owen was found guilty on three charges of libel. By late August, however, the Defence Fund stood at £240. 17. 11d, well above the fine imposed on Owen by the courts. Nonetheless, the Fund was continued until November 1872, by which time £443. 2. 7d. had been raised.<sup>90</sup> Owen later admitted that 'surplus ... from the Defence Fund' had helped to keep the Society solvent, or at least to reduce its losses.<sup>91</sup> This surplus, however, amounted to only £51.<sup>92</sup> Consequently, if £50 had been subtracted from the Fund to pay Owen's fine in August 1872, and the sum of £51 remained at the end as a surplus, it is clear that £342. 2. 7d. must have been absorbed by the Society during the course of the ten months since June 1872. Evidence from the same report of May 1873 suggests that this not inconsiderable sum may have contributed towards the cost of a new 'Wharfedale' printing machine, purchased in the same month.<sup>93</sup>

87. Potteries Examiner 18 April 1872, 28 September 1872.

88. *ibid.* 10 May 1873.

89. Minute Books, Oxford Circuit, Gloucester Assizes, 14 August 1872, 20 August 1872, P.R.O. Assi.1.65; Potteries Examiner 20 July 1872.

90. Potteries Examiner 24 August 1872, 2 November 1872.

91. *ibid.* 10 May 1873.

92. *ibid.*

93. *ibid.*

Additional revenue, required quickly to fulfil pressing needs, could also be raised by appealing for loans. The surplus raised by the Defence Fund, for example, was not sufficient to purchase a Wharfedale machine,<sup>94</sup> thus in November 1872, the date on which the Defence Fund was closed, Owen, at a 'Conference on the Printing of the Examiner' appealed for a further £700 or £900. This sum, he suggested, could be 'raised either as shares or loan capital from trade organisations'.<sup>95</sup> Similarly in August 1875 Matthias also appealed, through an advertisement in the Potteries Examiner for a loan of £500 to help continue the printing of the paper.<sup>96</sup>

Finally, publishers like Owen, Matthias and Morgan who owned or had ready access to printing machinery could increase their income by 'jobbing', by utilising their presses commercially. In addition to printing the Archer and the Labour League Examiner, Owen also produced reports of T.U.C. Conferences held between December 1873 and September 1877. In January 1874, for example, he issued the following notice in the columns of the Potteries Examiner:

'A FULL REPORT OF THE ANNUAL TRADES UNION CONGRESS, which will be held at Sheffield, in the week commencing January 12th, will appear in the journals published in connection with the LABOUR PRESS NEWSPAPER SYSTEM.

Among the papers already established under this system are the "Labour Press and Miners' and Workmen's Examiner", "The Cannock Chase Examiner", "The Forest of Dean Examiner", and "The Tamworth Examiner". "The Labour Press and Miners' and Workmen's Examiner" is intended for general circulation in every industrial district of the United Kingdom, except where the above local labour journals are issued.

94. See price range p.179 above

95. Potteries Examiner 2 November 1872.

96. *ibid.* 21 August 1875.

The papers consist<sup>d</sup> of 48 columns of working class intelligence and general news.

The Report of the Trades Union Congress proceedings will consist of at least 30 columns of matter and will be a larger account of this Annual Parliament of Labour than any that has hitherto appeared.

"The Labour Press and Miners' and Workmen's Examiner", and the other journals named above, are published by Mr. Wm. OWEN, (member of the Trades Union Congress Parliamentary Committee) at the Examiner Office, Hanley, Staffordshire.

Orders received for the issue of the Examiner containing the report of the first three or four days' proceedings, sent to any part of the Kingdom in time for distribution on Saturday, the 17th January. The remainder of the report will appear in the issue following.

The whole report, which will form an admirable record of the Congress Meeting, will be made up into pamphlet form, and issued the week after the Conference, at 8s 4d per 100.

Orders received before, or at the sitting of the Congress.

Mr. Owen is willing to make arrangements with the Trade Societies of any centre of industry to issue a local labour journal, in connection with the Labour Press Newspaper System, which has been originated with a view to the establishment of labour journals throughout the country. WORKINGMEN, SUPPORT THE PAPERS OF YOUR CLASS'. 97



The notice combines skilfully information concerning the T.U.C. reports with advertisements for Owen's new Examiner editions. Previous to 1874, the earliest T.U.C. reports had been printed by Foster, who, in the 1874 to 1875 session was paid £37. 3. Od. by the Congress for printing services. During the same period Owen was also paid £12. 0. Od. by the Congress as remuneration for similar services.<sup>98</sup> In February 1874 the London Trades Council, in a discussion of the Sheffield Trades Union Congress Conference, noted that

'the full report of the proceedings of the Congress having been published in pamphlet form by Mr. Owen of the Potteries, it was unnecessary to give in detail the general work done'.<sup>99</sup>

Consequently it was resolved

'that 200 copies of the Pamphlet Congress reports be purchased for the London Trades, and the copies to be sent to the Members of the Council'.<sup>100</sup>

At eight shillings and fourpence per hundred copies, the London Trades Council alone thus contributed only sixteen shillings and eightpence to Owen's total income from sales of the reports.

Owen continued to be the T.U.C.'s official printer of Conference reports until 1877.<sup>101</sup> In September 1877, however, Conference Reports were printed and published by the Manchester Co-operative Printing Society.<sup>102</sup> On 11 October 1877, a member of the London Trades Council (L.T.C.) noted that

'this year the Trades Parliamentary Committee had undertaken to get their reports printed themselves, and they had been done in Manchester at the Balloon Street Co-operative Printing Works'.<sup>103</sup>

98. T.U.C. Financial Reports 1868-1876, February 14 1874, p.34, Howell Coll.

99. London Trades Council, Minutes of Special Delegate Meeting 19 February 1874, Col.III.

100. *ibid.*

101. Cf. T.U.C. Conference Reports 1875, 1876, Howell Coll.

102. T.U.C. Conference Report, September 1877, Howell Coll.

103. London Trades Council, Minutes of Meeting, 11 October 1877, Vol.IV.

In October 1877 Kenny, of the General Labourers Amalgamated Union<sup>104</sup> asked the Council

'why the printing of the Congress reports had been taken away from the man - Mr. Owen of the Potteries who was a trade unionist and had helped with his newspaper the cause of trade unionism - who had printed them before, and this year given to the Co-operative printing works in Manchester, unless some members of the Parliamentary Committee had shares in the Co-operative Works, and therefore had a pecuniary interest in doing so'.<sup>105</sup>

In reply, the secretary of the L.T.C. explained that the 'new reports were better printed, on better paper and ten pages longer than formerly at the same price'.<sup>106</sup> Allegations made against members of the Parliamentary Committee were not replied to.

Morgan also drew an income from diverse jobbing enterprises. In addition to printing and publishing a 'Merthyr Almanack',<sup>107</sup> he and Anne Morgan also produced various forms of trade union and Friendly Society regalia and printed official forms. For example, he alerted 'Lodge Secretaries and Others' to the fact that 'contribution cards, Rules, Notices, Statements, Reports, Account Books and General Printing of every description'<sup>108</sup> was available from the Workman's Advocate office. 'Contracts', however, were not 'entered into'.<sup>109</sup> In a subsequent notice to his readers Morgan confirmed that 'the Workman's Advocate office is completely fitted up with every appliance for the execution of every description of printing. Forms, bills, cards, circulars, programmes required for eisteddforau, literary meetings, penny readings, entertainments, concerts, lectures, societies etc.etc.

104. London Trades Council, Minutes of Meeting, 3 January 1878; 19 July 1877 Vol.IV.

105. *ibid.* 1 October 1877.

106. *ibid.*

107. Workman's Advocate 20 September 1873.

108. *ibid.* 6 Sept. 1873, 1 August, 1874.

109. *ibid.* 1 August 1874.

together with the binding of Books'.<sup>110</sup> The printing facilities which working class newspapers made available during the 1870's to trade unionist and local cultural activities was continued by other papers. In September 1887, for example, the editor of the Labour Tribune informed 'Secretaries, Agents and Checkweighmen and others', that 'Printing for Clubs, Friendly Societies, Unions &c. can be done on the most favourable terms at the Labour Tribune Office'.<sup>111</sup> Similarly, in March 1914 the Tamworth Trades and Labour Council ordered '100 large bills and 100 2nd size with 2000 Hand Bills' from a local paper, and in the following month requested the Daily Citizen 'for the use of a Banner for Labour Day'.<sup>112</sup> A number of trade unions were eager to take advantage of these facilities. The National Association of Enginemen Firemen and Fitters, for instance, a small group of skilled workers who seceded from the A.A.M. in autumn 1873,<sup>113</sup> stipulated in its Rule Book that J.T.Morgan was to be their 'sole supplier of documents'.<sup>114</sup>

#### Advertisements.

In June 1872, William Owen addressed a meeting of 'several thousand' miners, nut and bolt makers, vice makers and locksmiths held at Darlaston under the auspices of the Conference of the South Staffordshire Trades on the subject of the subordination of the press. Existing newspapers, Owen informed the delegates, were 'ruled by capital and advocated capitalists interests',<sup>115</sup> and that for a journal to loosen that grip required determination, political will and an independent source of finance. Advertising, Owen continued, prejudiced such determination and compromised the independence of the paper from the control of capital. At the heart of the crisis of the Potteries Examiner, Owen argued, lay his own determination not to include in its columns commercial advertisements. Owen was adamant on this issue.

110. *ibid.* 29 January 1875.

111. Labour Tribune 3 September 1887.

112. Minute Book, Tamworth Trades and Labour Council, 25 March 1914. 29 April 1914, Staffordshire R.O. 398/1.

113. Workmen's Advocate 29 January 1875.

114. General Rules of the National United Association of Enginemen, Firemen and Fitters (Swansea 1874), p.48, P.R.O. FS7/5/188.

115. Potteries Examiner 15 June 1872.

'No trades union journal could command advertisements', he insisted, 'because they had to contend against that class who advertised in newspapers.'<sup>116</sup>

The problem was compounded by difficulties in attracting non-commercial advertisements. Owen regarded official local government notices as a neutral source of revenue, but his papers met with stiff resistance from those official local bodies. Time and again they refused to insert their advertisements and public notices in the Potteries Examiner, and Owen became convinced that employers and local administrators were jointly attempting to squeeze his paper out of circulation. For example, in October 1871 the local School Board refused to insert in the Potteries Examiner a notice distributed to all other local newspapers advertising a vacancy on the Board. Infuriated, Owen devoted a whole editorial to denouncing the Hanley School Board Officers for their blatant act of discrimination against his paper.

'It is a trades paper, established to protect the working men's trade rights, but it is also as much a local journal as any that is published or circulated in the district.... There would have been no objection on the part of such gentlemen as Mr. C. Wedgewood and Mr. Wragge to advertising in the paper if it had been established to promote the interests of capital. It is only the workmen who must be denied the right of invoking the power of the Press on their side. There are hundreds of capitalists' papers that bow the fawning knee to wealth, but use their power to crush every movement of the working-men towards social or political independence'.<sup>117</sup>

116. *ibid.* 15 June 1872.

117. *ibid.* 21 October 1871.

In its earliest years, therefore, the Potteries Examiner had to cope with pressing financial difficulties. According to W. Shepherdson, writing in 1876, 'Advertisements ... constitute the chief source of revenue'<sup>118</sup> of all provincial papers. Furthermore, it was<sup>of</sup> the utmost importance that advertisement revenue was collected from the beginning of the enterprise, since

'Years have to pass away before any substantial returns from this source can be secured, yet during all this probationary period there must be a progressive increase in the cost of producing the paper'.<sup>119</sup>

Consequently, Shepherdson argued, 'capitalists looked upon them (newspaper ventures) with extreme doubt'.<sup>120</sup> A Report of the Directors to the Shareholders of the Gwalia Newspaper and Printing Company of June 1886 bears testimony to the fact that advertisement revenue, whilst not being the most important source of revenue, was an extremely significant one. Their income for the year ending 31 March 1886 was distributed thus:

Table 21.     Income of the Gwalia Newspaper and Printing Company for  
Year Ending 31 March 1886.<sup>121</sup>

By Sale of Newspapers	£1757. 0. 8
Advertisements	£984. 8. 10.
Printing Work	<u>£840. 15. 9</u>
<u>Total Income</u>	<u>£3582. 5. 3.</u>

In the case of the Gwalia, therefore, approximately 27.5 per cent of its income in this sample year was derived from advertisements. On purely financial grounds, therefore, Owen was forced to conclude that his principled

118. W. Shepherdson, Starting a "Daily" in the Provinces, (1876), p.19.

119. *ibid.*

120. *ibid.* p.19.

121. Report of the Directors to the Shareholders at the Fourth Annual Ordinary Meeting, 12 June 1886, *op.cit.*

aversion to commercial advertisements was untenable, particularly in view of the difficulties of attracting<sup>r</sup> revenue from other sources. The columns of his papers were subsequently opened to an ever increasing number of commercial advertisements, and by 1874 Owen boasted that his papers were 'an excellent advertising medium'.<sup>122</sup> Three years later he announced that he was prepared 'to enter into arrangements for inserting advertisements in the whole series of papers',<sup>123</sup> including the Wolverhampton Times, the Midland Examiner and Times, the Shropshire Examiner, the Cannock Chase Examiner and the Forest of Dean Examiner.

A systematic sample of every tenth issue of the Potteries Examiner and of other labour and local newspapers and trade union papers reveals the extent of advertising in these papers. By calculating the annual mean of the total percentage space devoted to advertisements in each five or occasionally six annual samples, the following tables may be constructed.

Advertisements: % of total content.

<u>Table 22.</u>	<u>Potteries Examiner</u>	<u>Staffordshire Sentinel</u>	<u>Difference of Sentinel over Examiner (%)</u>
1871	25.4	34.6	+9.2
1872	21.3	36.4	+15.1
1873	34	35.8	+1.8
1874	34.2	35.4	+1.2
1875	30.2	35.2	+5
1876	29.5	36	+6.5
1877	34.2	35	+0.8
1878	32.1	30	-2.1
1879	31	26	-5
1880	27.4	27.4	=

With the exception of the year 1872, when the difference between the advertising space of the two papers is at its widest, the year, incidentally, in which Owen delivered his attack on the principle of commercial advertisements, the mean difference in the proportion of space devoted to advertisements in the Staffordshire Sentinel over the Potteries Examiner between 1871 and 1877 inclusive is a mere 4.08%. During the following two years the space allotted to advertisements in the Potters Examiner actually

122. C.Mitchell and Co. op.cit. (1874).

123. ibid (1877), p.205

exceeds that of the Staffordshire Sentinel. Notice also the quite dramatic leap in the proportion of space devoted to advertisements between 1872 and 1873, a leap of 12.7%, and the slight diminution of the ratio of advertisements to other news material during the years of T.D. Matthias's editorship in 1875 and 1876.

A similar pattern may be observed of a high incidence of advertisement material in two other randomly selected labour newspapers published by William Owen.

Table 23.                      Advertisements : % of total content

<u>Year</u>	<u>Labour Press and Miners' and Workmen's Examiner</u>
1873	6.7
1874	13.3
1875	22.3
1876	30.5
1877	38.9
1878	5.9

In the Examiners the years 1874 to 1876 were ones of sharp expansion in the proportion of their total space made available by the editor to commercial advertisements.

The Wolverhampton Times itself consisted of a relatively large proportion of advertisements.

Table 24.                      Advertisements : % of total content

<u>Year</u>	<u>Wolverhampton Times</u>
1875	31.6
1876	33.6
1877	34.8

The highest proportion of advertisements was, however, found in William Owen's Liberal evening paper, the Daily Midland Echo, established in Wolverhampton in December 1877. For this daily paper, a systematic monthly sample was

taken of the percentage of the total content devoted to advertisements, from which the following quarterly means were calculated.

Table 25.                      Advertisements : % of total content (quarterly).

<u>Quarter</u>	<u>Daily Midland Echo</u>
Jan.-March 1878	53.4
April-June 1878	48.6
July-September 1878	52.2
Oct.-Dec. 1878	43.9

It is apparent, therefore, that a tendency towards the inclusion of an increasing proportion of advertisements in the labour and Liberal newspapers of William Owen continued throughout the 1870's.

As the dimensions of advertising space increased, so did the financial returns. From information relating to the cost of commercial advertisements in Owen's papers it is possible to calculate very approximately a mean weekly income in any given year from advertisement revenue. In 1871 Owen charged the following rates for advertisements printed in the Potteries Examiner.

Table 26.                      Potteries Examiner Advertisement Charges valid from 17 March 1871.

	s.	d.
2 lines, or 14 words	0	6
3        .. 23    ..	0	9
4        .. 32    ..	1	0
5        .. 40    ..	1	3
6        .. 50    ..	1	6
7        .. 60    ..	1	9
8        .. 70    ..	20	

Plus 3d. for each additional line, or nine words. An unspecified 'reduced rate' was offered for business advertisements inserted as a series.

In January 1876, Owen's scale of advertisement charges were substantially increased.



Table 27.

Potteries Examiner Advertisement Charges,  
valid from 8 January 1876.

	<u>s.</u>	<u>d.</u>
1 line	0	6
2 lines	1	0
3 ..	1	3
4 ..	1	6
Every additional 4 lines	1	0 each.

Moreover, from September 1878, Owen introduced a special, cheaper category of advertisement, which included non-commercial advertisements such as Situations Vacant, Situations Wanted, Houses Wanted, Houses to Let or to Sell, Apartments Wanted or To Let, Articles Lost or Found, Miscellaneous Wants and Announcements of Birth, Death or Marriage notices. The new charge for this category was as follows:

Table 28.

Potteries Examiner Advertisement Charges for  
non-Commercial Advertisements valid from  
14 September 1878. (Prepaid).

<u>Not exceeding</u>	<u>s.</u>	<u>d.</u>
18 words or 2 lines	0.	6.
24 .. 2½ ..	0	9
32 .. 3 ..	1	0
40 .. 4 ..	1	3
48 .. 5 ..	1	6
56 .. 6 ..	1	9
64 .. 7 ..	2	0

Announcements of Birth, Death, Marriage over 36 words, 1. Od.

An exactly similar scale was adopted by Owen and Spencer in relation to advertisement rates in the Midland Echo in 1877 and 1878.

From October 1873 the Forest of Dean Examiner charged advertisers by the inch rather than by the line, at least for commercial advertisements.

Table 29.

Forest of Dean Examiner Advertisement Charges  
valid from 11 October 1873.

## a) Contract Advertisements.

1 inch, single column	9s per quarter,
1½            ..	13s        ..
2             ..	15s        ..

## b) Wanted, To Let Advertisements per insertion

3 lines or under	s: d.
4            ..	1    4
5            ..	1    8
6            ..	2    0

The Labour Press, Miners' and Workmen's Examiner operated a similar scale, as did all the Examiner editions.

The scales of advertisement rates varied so much from paper to paper that it is virtually impossible to compare with any degree of accuracy prices charged to advertisers by different local newspapers. Many, for example, published only their non-commercial and property rates, preferring to negotiate privately with contract or long term advertisers. A comparison between the property rates of the Examiner and those of a rival local newspaper, the Midland Counties Evening Express, reveals that Owen's prices for this type of advertisement were considerably higher than those of his competitor.<sup>124</sup> This may partly explain why so few such advertisements appeared in the paper, although the principal explanation for their absence in this case must surely be the general lack of property among the paper's readers.

Because of the obvious difficulties involved in any attempt to standardise line size or to estimate with any degree of accuracy an average number of lines per column inch, particularly those used in advertisements

124. Midland Counties Evening Express 2 November 1874. A four paged halfpenny daily published in Wolverhampton. 'Small advertisement' rate scale was as follows:

	Insertions		
	1	3	6
2 lines	4d	8d	1.0
4 lines	8d	1.4d	2.0

All Births, marriages and deaths, 1.0 per insertion.

where type size varied from advertisement to advertisement, the Contract advertisement scale of the Forest of Dean Examiner, used also in other editions, will be used as the basis for an assessment of mean weekly advertisement revenue income. Acting on the assumption that, at most, nine shillings per inch per quarter, or nine pence per inch per week, was received as advertisement revenue, it is possible to estimate a maximum weekly income.

Table 30.

Approximate projection of maximum mean Advertisement income per issue

<u>Year</u>	<u>Examiner/Miner</u>
1874	£3. 10. 0.
1875	£6. 0. 0.
1876	£8. 3. 0.
1877	£9. 2. 0.
1878	£0. 16. 0.

If a similar calculation, made on the same cost basis, is applied to the mean advertisement returns of the Potteries Examiner, it is possible to estimate, again very approximately, a maximum weekly advertisement income.

Table 31.

Approximate projection of maximum mean Advertisement income per issue.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Potteries Examiner</u>
1871	£7. 4. 0.
1872	£7.13. 9.
1873	£12.9. 0.
1874	£12.6. 0.
1875	£10.17.6.
1876	£10.13.0.
1877	£12.6. 0.
1878	£11.11.0.
1879	£11.3. 6.
1880	£9.18. 0.

Despite William Owen's protestations to the contrary, therefore, commercial advertisements did provide a significant proportion of the Potteries Examiner's weekly income, particularly from 1873 onwards. However two points concerning advertisement income require further clarification. Firstly advertisements

in the Wolverhampton based Examiner editions (excluding the Potteries Examiner) were, after 24 April 1875, reproduced in identical fashion in each edition. Previous to that date some local advertisements did appear in local editions, but the majority were syndicated by Owen through the whole system. Consequently, advertisement income per week did not exceed the highest estimate of the returns of an individual edition. Advertisers paid only once, although their advertisements were printed in different editions in different localities simultaneously. Secondly it is apparent that advertisers were attracted by the system's wide geographical coverage. Therefore, the act of extending the paper's geographical circulation from 1874 was also a financially sound investment where advertisers were concerned.

Morgan also printed large numbers of commercial advertisements in both the Workman's Advocate and Amddiffynydd y Gweithwr. In February 1874 he informed his readers that

'The widely-extended and rapidly-increasing circulation of the Workman's Advocate proclaims it accordingly to be the best and choicest medium in South Wales and Monmouthshire of bringing to the notice of the general public those persons who propose getting on by "small profits and quick returns"....A reader of our Journal saw an advertisement in our pages in Burslem in North Staffordshire, and came all the way into South Wales, and to the neighbourhood of Merthyr, in order to obtain the article advertised....'<sup>125</sup>

The proportions of Morgan's papers devoted to advertisements matched those of other local newspapers.

Table 32. Advertisements: % of total content per column inch						
Year	<u>Workman's Advocate</u>	<u>Amddiffynydd y Gweithwr</u>	<u>Tarian y Gweithwr</u>	<u>Y Gwlad-garw</u>	<u>Merthyr Telegraph</u>	<u>Merthyr Express</u>
1873	43.6	-	-	-	-	39.7
1874	39	-	-	-	-	-
1875	40.3	47.4	25	32.5	39.5	-

125. Workman's Advocate 14 February 1874.

The above mentioned working class newspapers did not, however, command as many advertisements, in terms of their total space as did the national dailies. In one week in 1886, for example, 49% of the Times, 51% of the Standard and 60.6% of the Telegraph consisted of advertisements. At the same time the Scotsman with 40.6% and the Scottish News with only 26.2% of space devoted to advertisements in the same week in 1886 compare very favourably with English and Welsh working class newspapers.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, advertisement levels in the Potteries Examiner, the Forest of Dean Examiner, the Labour Press, Miners' and Workmen's Examiner, the Workman's Advocate, Tarian y Gweithiwr and the other papers which are included in the sample are significantly higher than those found in Reynolds's, Lloyd's or the Edinburgh Reformer.

Table 33. Advertisements: % of total content per column inch<sup>127</sup>

a)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Reynolds's</u>	<u>Lloyd's</u>
1862	15	16.5
1866	14.9	26
1870	13.9	24.7
1874	19.1	28
1878	21.7	28.4

b)

The Edinburgh Reformer

1868	12.5
1869	13
1870	14.4
1871	13.3
1872	10.8
1873	13.7
1874	12.3
1875	12.5

Moreover, journals controlled directly by trade unions or by the representatives of particular trades tended to contain fewer advertisements. The Labourers' Union Chronicle, for example, contained only 3.1% of total content in 1875 and 3.8% per issue in 1876. Similarly, the Miner's Advocate and Record printed no advertisements at all in the first three ten-weekly samples, an average of only 1.4% per issue for the remainder of 1873, and rising to a mere

126. Calculated from information provided by A.Reid, 'How a Provincial Newspaper is managed', Nineteenth Century, 1886, XX, p.395.

127. V.Berridge, in Boyce et al, op.cit., p.250.

2.9% per sample issue in 1874.

Having established that both Owen and Morgan did accept commercial advertisements in their newspapers, and did profit from so doing, it remains necessary to conduct two further enquiries. Briefly, we need to know who the advertisers were and where they advertised from.

The analysis of advertisements and advertisers which follows is based upon a systematic sample of one in each twenty successive issues of the Labour Press, Miners' and Workmen's Examiner (sample frame 4 April 1874 to 14 September 1877), the Wolverhampton Chronicle (sample frame 1 April 1874 to 12 September 1877), the Wolverhampton Times (sample frame 9 January 1875 to 16 October 1875) and the Workman's Advocate (sample frame 4 April 1874 to 15 October 1875). Categories of advertisements, furthermore, have been simplified and codified in the following manner :

Table 34.            Key to Advertisement Categories.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Items included</u>
<u>Medical</u>	Chemists, herbalists, remedies, surgical appliances, consultations, medical works.
Loans	Loans, banks, pawnbrokers, partnerships.
Consumer Hardware	Musical instruments, sewing machines, watches, jewellery, booksellers, stationers, printers, bookbinders, printing equipment, florists, novelties, trade union regalia, carriages for hire or purchase, finished metals.
Foods	Branded foods, grocers, general stores, kitchen equipment, wholesale foods, confectionaries.
Drapery	Drapery, millinery, tailoring, hatting, bootmaking and repairing.
Alcohol	Wine, spirits, breweries, tobacco.
Household	China, mirrors, furniture, upholstery, house furnishings in general.
Leisure	Concert Halls, tours, public houses, restaurants, tea-shops, dining rooms, workmen's clubs.
Miscellaneous	Occult, confidential advice, missing persons, trade and political associations.
Companies	Companies, Life Assurance and Insurance Societies, Prospectuses.
Travel	Emigration, private and Government schemes, travel facilities.
Services	Coal merchants, undertakers, slaughterers, saddlers, horse repositories, removals, dyers, cleaners, carpenters, surveyors, architects, builders, materials, plumbers.

Table 34 (Continued)

Public	Public notices, local authorities, elections: local government.
Property	For Sale, to let, land, housing, estates, farms.
Employment	Situations wanted and situations vacant.
Education	Schools and colleges.
Agricultural	Farming materials, implements, machinery, livestock, fertilisers

By using these simplified categories it is possible to outline broadly the types of advertisements printed in working class journals and in another local newspaper. The following table compares the total number of items per category which appeared in the sample issues of the Wolverhampton Chronicle, the Labour Press, Miners' and Workmen's Examiner (1874 to 1877, henceforth Examiner/Miner), and the Workman's Advocate.

Table 35.

Advertisement distribution : total number of items.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Wolverhampton Chronicle</u>	<u>Examiner/ Miner</u>	<u>Workman's Advocate</u>
Medical	361	147	76
Loans	150	66	14
Consumer Hrdre.	256	67	10
Foods	90	50	10
Drapery	92	44	1
Alcohol	55	30	
Household	53	29	
Leisure	132	30	
Misc.	76	32	
Companies	56	22	5
Travel	27	17	17
Services	84	34	3
Public	124		
Property	1213		
Employment	612		
Education	155		
Agricultural	62		
<u>Total</u>	<u>3598</u>	<u>466</u>	<u>136</u>

Expressed in percentage terms a significant discrepancy may be discerned in the relative distributions of certain advertisement categories.

Table 36.                      Advertisement distribution : relative percentages of categories.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Wolverhampton Chronicle</u>	<u>Examiner/ Miner</u>	<u>Workman's Advocate</u>
Medical	10.03	25.88	55.88.
Loans	4.17	11.61	10.29
Consumer Hrdre.	7.11	11.78	7.35
Foods	2.50	8.80	7.35
Drapery	2.56	7.74	0.73
Alcohol	1.53	5.28	
Household	1.47	5.10	
Leisure	3.67	5.28	
Misc.	2.11	5.63	
Companies	1.55	3.87	3.68
Travel	0.75	2.99	12.50
Services	2.33	5.98	2.21
Public	3.45		
Property	33.71		
Employment	17.00		
Education	4.31		
Agricultural	1.72		
<u>Total</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

In both the Examiner and the Workman's Advocate Medical Advertisements comprise the largest single advertisement category, followed by Consumer Hardware and Travel respectively in the Examiner and the Workmen's Advocate, and, thirdly, Loans in both papers. In contrast, Medical advertisements come a poor third in the Wolverhampton Chronicle following Property and Employment, categories which do not appear at all in either working class newspaper.

But what of the geographical origins of these advertisements?

The following table distributes advertisements from the Labour Press, the Workman's Advocate and Owen's short-lived Wolverhampton Times (sample frame 9 January 1875 to 16 October 1875) according to their regional origin.

Table 37.                      Regional Origin of Advertisements.

<u>Region</u>	<u>Labour Press</u>	<u>Wolverhampton Times</u>	<u>Workman's Advocate</u>
Staffordshire, Shropshire, Birmingham.	343	240	13
London	130	21	66
North West	20	4	13
Border, South and West	22		3



Table 37 (Continued)

East Midlands	12	6	2
Yorkshire	12	4	1
Wales	13	1	35
Scotland and Ireland	4		3

The great majority of advertisements in both Owen's papers are drawn from their counties of circulation, whilst most advertisements in Morgan's Workman's Advocate are from London based enterprises - twice as many as from Wales itself. A similar discrepancy may be noted by comparing the origins of advertisements from within the papers' respective regions.

Table 38. Local Origin of Advertisements : (a) Staffordshire, Shropshire, Birmingham.

<u>Town</u>	<u>Labour Press</u>	<u>Wolverhampton Times</u>
Wolverhampton	165	108
Walsall	60	30
Birmingham	35	6
Hednesford	26	3
Wednesbury	22	51
Oakengates	6	
Cannock	5	1
West Bromwich	4	8
Newcastle	3	
Hanley	3	1
Wellington	3	
Tamworth	2	
Bilston	2	2
Tunstall	1	
Dudley	1	1
Great Bridge	1	2
Bloxwich	1	2
Stalybridge	1	
Shareshill	1	
Tottenham	1	
Willenhall		11
Darlaston		11
Deepfields		1
Brownhills		1
Chase Town		1
<u>Total</u>	<u>343</u>	<u>240</u>

Again the majority of advertisements originate in the town in which the paper is published and printed. In the case of the Workman's Advocate, however,

the relationship between home-town advertisers and the paper is much less clear.

Table 39.                      Local Origin of Advertisements : (b) Wales.

<u>Town</u>	<u>Workman's Advocate</u>
Merthyr	17
Aberdare	3
Cardiff	2
Swansea	5
Tredegar	1
Pontardawe	2
Hirwaun	2
Pontypridd	3
<u>Total</u>	<u>35</u>

Advertisements from Merthyr, however, were erratic - in the second sample there were none, in the fourth, eight. This suggests strongly that Morgan did not develop a long term relationship with his local advertisers.

#### Trade Union Subscriptions.

In addition to shares purchased from printing companies and Societies and materials ordered from their jobbing branches, trade unionists supported working class newspapers with their donated subscriptions. In 1871 Owen estimated that four thousand trade unionists in and around the Potteries contributed regularly to the maintenance of the Potteries Examiner.<sup>128</sup> In 1872, he claimed that during the early years of the Potteries Examiner the potters of North Staffordshire had contributed fourpence per month to the paper's fund.<sup>129</sup> However, following the reorganisation of the proprietary and the redistribution of the weight of individual subscriptions by the agreement of miners and ironworkers in North Staffordshire, in 1871 the local levy was reduced to one penny per month per member.<sup>130</sup> During the early summer of 1872, however, support for the paper from outside North Staffordshire increased, and in May of that year a

128. Potteries Examiner 7 April 1871.

129. *ibid.* 15 June 1872.

130. *ibid.* 15 June 1872.

conference of the one thousand five hundred members of the Cannock Chase District of the A.A.M. resolved to pay 'the same levy per month in support of the Examiner as the workmen of North Stafford'.<sup>131</sup> On 10 June 1872, a Conference of the South Stafford Trades representing miners from South Staffordshire, Dudley, and East Warwick, nut and bolt makers, Dudley vice makers, Willenhall and Walsall locksmiths, numbering over seven thousand trade unionists met at Darlaston. During the Conference it was resolved to endeavour to induce all the societies represented to pay a similar levy in support of the Potteries Examiner.<sup>132</sup> Within a month R. Juggins of the Nut and Bolt Makers' Union, in conjunction with the Lock and Key Smiths' union, held a meeting at Willenhall to 'extend the Examiner', at which Juggins proposed that the meeting adopt the recommendation of the 10 June Darlaston Conference and commence payment of one penny per member per month to the Potteries Examiner, in order to make it into 'a South Staffordshire Journal'.<sup>133</sup>

In May 1873 Owen approached the Shropshire District of Miners at Ironbridge with the suggestion that the Potteries Examiner may prove to be 'invaluable to them'.<sup>134</sup> He explained that he was prepared to produce a Shropshire edition of the Examiner on condition that they agree to support it by paying a levy of one penny per month per member, 'in the same way as the working men of North Stafford'.<sup>135</sup> The District agreed to Owen's condition, and consequently a Shropshire Examiner began to be issued from August 1873. In July 1874 a further meeting of the Shropshire United District of the A.A.M. debated

'the question as to the continuation of support to the Examiner.....All admitted the importance of having a truthful organ, which, without fear of prejudice gave reports of their proceedings, and some expressed themselves highly pleased with the marked ability displayed in its present conduct'.<sup>136</sup>

- 131. *ibid.* 1 June 1872.
- 132. *ibid.* 15 June 1872.
- 133. *ibid.* 20 July 1872.
- 134. *ibid.* 17 May 1873.
- 135. *ibid.* 17 May 1873.
- 136. Shropshire Examiner 4 July 1874.

The meeting then called on Owen to

'state his views on the subject, which he did by pointing out the peculiar disadvantages under which a paper of the kind necessarily laboured, and the necessity for extraneous support if it was to be maintained in its present state'.<sup>137</sup>

Eventually, 'the delegates almost unanimously resolved to continue the support as before, for the next six months'.<sup>138</sup>

The colliers and other workers of the Forest of Dean also contributed regularly to the funds of their local edition of the Examiner. In 1874 the three thousand five hundred members of the Forest of Dean District of the A.A.M. paid Owen £9. 2. 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d per month in addition to the weekly cost of the paper itself.<sup>139</sup> This financial commitment to the Forest of Dean Examiner was reaffirmed at the time of the district's secession from the A.A.M. in February 1874 and again in February 1875.<sup>140</sup> By that time, however, it was becoming clear that the whole network was facing acute financial difficulty. In July 1875, T.D. Matthias, William Brown and Lloyd Jones appealed for more voluntary aid for the Potteries Examiner. Matthias argued that the penny halfpenny price of the paper was not sufficient to pay for its production, and asked the Audley Miners for a new levy of one penny per member per month.<sup>141</sup> The following month Matthias appealed for a substantial loan, and in August the A.A.M. was formally dissolved. By September 1875 the organised network of subscriptions to the Labour Press Newspaper System had been badly eroded.

Another means of supporting working class newspapers was through established groups of workers and trade unionists guaranteeing the sale of a

137. Shropshire Examiner 4 July 1874.

138. ibid.

139. Forest of Dean Examiner 12 February 1874.

140. Miners' and Workmen's Examiner 20 February 1875.

141. Potteries Examiner 10 July 1875.

fixed number of copies of the paper each week. This support system appears to have been the one most assiduously pursued by Morgan with regard to the Workman's Advocate and Amddiffyndd y Gweithiwr. In November 1873, for example, Morgan addressed a meeting of the General Association of Smiths and Strikers at Neath, in consequence of which it was

'unanimously resolved that this Conference strongly urge the lodges to encourage the circulation of the Workman's Advocate as much as possible, and that each lodge in this Union undertake the sale of at least one dozen copies'.<sup>142</sup>

In the week when this guarantee was secured, Morgan lengthened the subtitle of his paper to 'The Official Organ of the Colliers; Miners, Ironworkers, Smiths, Enginemen, Stokers, Tinworkers etc.'<sup>143</sup> Early in the following month, moreover, Amddiffynnydd y Gweithiwr also became an official paper of the National Union of Enginemen and Stokers.<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, in January 1874, Morgan was invited to address delegates from Glamorgan, Monmouthshire and Carmarthenshire at the Swansea Conference of the Independent Association of Tinplate Makers. Following a motion proposed by William Lewis, Secretary to the union, it was 'resolved to adopt the Workman's Advocate as the official organ of the union ... each lodge to take twelve copies'.<sup>145</sup>

In 1874, the Bristol, West of England and South Wales Amalgamated Labourers Union, the Presidency of which Morgan had been offered but declined to accept in July of the same year,<sup>146</sup> also resolved to adopt the Workman's Advocate as the official organ for South Wales, and the Examiner for the West of England, the sum of £5 being 'raised for the guarantee funds of each'.<sup>147</sup>

In November 1877 Owen similarly sought guaranteed sales of the Miner through local miners' lodges in return for special attention given to their

142. Workman's Advocate to 29 November 1873.

143. *ibid.*

144. Amddiffynnydd y Gweithiwr 6 Dec. 1873.

145. Workman's Advocate 3 Jan '74.

146. *ibid.* 18 July 1874.

147. *ibid.*

meetings and activities.

'To Miners' Associations, Special Notice, The Publishers of the Miner are prepared to make arrangements with the officers of any organised body of miners, to insert all their trade news, letters and special reports, and to make the Miner the exponent of their principles and the representative of their movements, on condition that such Society orders one copy of the paper for each of its members, which copies will be supplied at one halfpence each'.<sup>148</sup>

148. Miner 3 November 1877.

## CHAPTER SIX

### LABOUR JOURNALISM

Throughout the thesis the papers produced by William Owen and J.T.Morgan between 1871 and 1878 have been referred to as 'labour newspapers'.<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested that 'labour newspapers' were in numerous ways qualitatively different to other local newspapers, in that they performed a different social function. Underlying this suggestion has been the assumption that 'labour journalism' was also a distinct species of the profession, being different in kind and in function to other forms of contemporary journalism. The purpose of this chapter is to examine this assumption and to inquire into the defining features of mid-Victorian 'labour journalism'.

Thus far the thesis has argued that with regard to the structure of content, the readership, the correspondents, the financial support systems and the enthusiastic approval given to the Examiner and the Workman's Advocate by local and national trade union leaders, these papers were indeed the newspapers of a clearly identifiable interest group called for brevity and convenience 'labour'. Furthermore, they performed functions which other local newspapers were unable or unwilling to perform. However, the defining characteristics of 'labour journalism' as a style of journalism with distinct methods and objectives remain to be outlined. It will be argued in the following pages that these characteristics involve the means whereby editors engage with the events and the issues which concerned the readership of their papers. Consequently, this chapter will examine in greater detail aspects of the relationship which developed between the editors of labour newspapers and the local radical and trade union movements during one period of acute labour unrest. It will be argued that the

1. Much of the responsibility for naming them thus lie with the editors themselves: Owen, for example, entitled the Examiner series 'The Labour Newspaper System!

editors were deeply involved in the agitations co-ordinated by these movements at the local level. The argument will consist of two parts. Firstly, it will be shown that the editors were engaged in these movements as individual political and trade unionist activists. Secondly, it will be suggested that Owen and Morgan were conscious of their roles as journalists, and that in consequence their papers possessed ideological and organisational functions which were of considerable value to radicals and trade unionists in the period of heightened working class activity in the early 1870's.

i) Politics and trade unionism

The early 1870's were years of considerable excitement for British radicals. Disraeli's reform legislation of 1867, by doubling the electorate and increasing fivefold the number of working class electors, had opened up entirely new possibilities for working class political activity. Editors of labour newspapers were not slow to realise the importance of this recent development. Some historians have argued that the Reform Act of 1867 was entirely attributable to the political manoeuvrings of parties at Westminster, and that the measure was not conceived of as being democratic in any sense.<sup>2</sup> Alternative interpretations, however, suggest that the Act was passed partially as a result of a massive extra-Parliamentary campaign to secure manhood suffrage.<sup>3</sup> This agitation, it is argued, induced the War Office to draft a Reserve Force Bill for use in civil disturbances in 1866, a measure which indicated the tense atmosphere which existed at the time of the passing of the Act through the two Houses. Whatever the precise nature of the political response to the agitation was in reality, it is clear that the campaign itself continued for many years after 1867.

The post-1867 Reform agitation pursued two principal objectives: the extension of the franchise to rural workers and the election of working class candidates to Parliament. The latter demand in particular revealed

2. H.Cowling, 1867, Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution, (Cambridge 1967) p.46 passim.

3. R.Harrison, Before the Socialists, (1965), p.191.



the depth of the divisions within the reform movement. In October 1867 the London Working Men's Association explained the position clearly in the Bee-Hive.

'To promote the return of sound middleclass Reformers will be the duty of the National Reform Union and the Reform League, while it will be the especial duty of the London Working Men's Association to promote the direct representation of labour'.<sup>4</sup>

Following Gladstone's return to power in 1868 the demand for working class M.P.'s was adopted by radicals throughout the country, although, in general, the trade unions remained reluctant to commit themselves to concerted political action.

From 1873 Owen and Morgan raised the issue of labour representation frequently in their papers. In so doing they emphasised their belief that only labour newspapers could understand and sympathise with the reform movement: 'Middle class papers' Owen argued, had grave 'misconceptions as to labour representation'. Furthermore

'none of the middle class and capitalist journals appear to be able to look fairly at the question of the direct representation of labour, even when they are really disposed to do so'.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast to these journals, Owen's papers began to argue for a 'New Working Class Political Programme' from the early spring of 1873. The object of this programme was to ensure the success of the demands of independent labour within the loose framework of the Liberal Party.<sup>6</sup> Owen's arguments in editorial leaders supporting this programme mirrored

4. Bee-Hive 5 October 1867.

5. Forest of Dean Examiner 20 March 1874.

6. Potteries Examiner 15 February 1873, 8 August 1874.

developments outside his newsroom. In May 1870 a Potteries Labour Representation League had been established under the leadership of two local trade union leaders, James Hand and Philip Harries.<sup>7</sup> For two years the League built up its organisation in North Staffordshire, and in March 1873 it nominated its first official 'labour candidate', the Brecon radical A.A.Walton. The nomination meeting was addressed by Henry Broadhurst, national secretary to the Labour Representation League, George Howell of the London Trades Council, and William Owen, and in the voting Walton beat by a narrow margin three other prominent candidates, G.W.M.Reynolds, Lloyd Jones and G.Melly.<sup>8</sup> Significantly, between March 1873 and the General Election of February 1874 Owen acted as Walton's official election agent. He also printed posters and handbills supporting 'Walton, the labour candidate and working man's friend'.<sup>9</sup>

Following Walton's defeat in February 1874,<sup>10</sup> new political clubs were founded in the area to continue the campaign for labour representation. Writing in leaders in the Potteries Examiner Owen argued against middle class Liberal involvement in these exclusively working class organisations, and urged their members to be vigilant lest they should be absorbed into the Liberal Party electoral machine.

'We believe heartily in Liberal Union, 'Owen added, 'but we are quite as thoroughly convinced that the best way for the workingman to secure it, when the next election comes, is to keep up their independent organisation, and to say, we will choose one of the candidates, and the middle or any of our class who choose to act

7. *ibid.* 5 May 1871.
8. *ibid.* 29 March 1873. Melly withdrew from the selection procedure and stood at the election as a Liberal candidate.
9. *ibid.* 14 February 1874.
10. The result, however, was encouraging to the L.R.L. : G.Melly(L), 6,700; R. Heath (C), 6180; Col Roden(L), 5,369; A.Walton (Workingmen's candidate) 5,198. Potteries Examiner 7 February 1874.

with them shall select another ... to defeat the Conservative. We advise the workmen of Stoke, and of all other towns in the borough, to persevere in an independent course in their political organisation'.<sup>11</sup>

The advice was heeded, and Walton fought the Stoke election again in February 1875, supported by the Labour Representation League, on whose Executive Council he had been appointed in May 1874,<sup>12</sup> and by the London Trades Council.<sup>13</sup> Though unsuccessful for a second time, the Labour Representation League eventually won the seat with the election of Henry Broadhurst at Stoke in 1880.<sup>14</sup>

Closely related to the struggle to secure working class candidates for Parliamentary seats was the campaign to extend labour representation in other areas of local government. School Boards, established in the wake of Foster's Education Act of 1870, attracted the particular attention of local radicals. Owen was himself elected to the Burslem School Board as a Liberal in March 1874, polling nearly three thousand votes.<sup>15</sup> In Merthyr too, the radical Rev. T.D. Matthias, later to become the editor of the Potteries Examiner, was elected to the Merthyr School Board in March 1874. Receiving nearly four thousand votes, Matthias replaced Mrs. Mary Crawshay, much to the dismay of other Merthyr newspapers.<sup>16</sup> Morgan's Workman's Advocate, however, had supported Matthias's campaign throughout, and following the victory Morgan optimistically predicted that the development was but the 'thin end of the wedge'.<sup>17</sup>

Morgan was also a strong and consistent advocate of labour representation in Parliament. During the General Election campaign of

11. *ibid.* 25 April 1874.

12. *ibid.* 25 April 1874, Forest of Dean Examiner 29 May 1874.

13. London Trades Council Meeting Minutes, 2 February 1875, Vol.III. Potteries Examiner 20 February 1875.

14. The election was won by Kenealy (6110). Walton received 4168 votes and the third candidate, Davenport, 3901. Potteries Examiner 20 February 1874.

15. *ibid.* 28 February 1874, 14 March 1874.

16. Workman's Advocate. 14 March, 1874.

17. *ibid.*

January 1874, the Workman's Advocate duly lent its support to the candidacy of Thomas Halliday, President of the A.A.M., the 'working men's candidate' for the borough of Merthyr Tydfil.

'Now will be the time for you, my fellow unionists, to show that you are true to your own selves and to your own interests. Election time has ever been the time when a certain class have been the most selfish of any, and I would urge you to follow their example. Be sufficiently selfish as to refuse your votes to any and every person who will not pledge himself to vote for your interests, and the interests of your Trade Unions, upon all occasions, and you will then be certain that you are using your vote to your own advantage. Working menelectors of Merthyr, Dowlais, Aberdare and Mountain Ash, VOTE FOR HALLIDAY, THE TRUE FRIEND OF THE UNION!'<sup>18</sup>.

Despite his admiration for Henry Richard, Morgan argued that

'We know Mr. Richard to be a true Liberal, but we want something more, we want men who will advocate the cause of the working classes against the tyrannical Pharoes of the day'.<sup>19</sup>

One correspondent to the paper suggested that the trade unions in each town should amalgamate to form a political organisation with a view to sending radical and independent worker representatives to Parliament.<sup>20</sup> Some trade unions also determined to support labour representation in South Wales. In October 1873, the National Amalgamated Association of Ironworkers' Conference at Newport resolved to agitate to send to Parliament

18. *ibid.* 31 January 1874.

19. *ibid.* 24 January 1874.

20. *ibid.* 4 October 1873.

'men from amongst ourselves, men of sound common sense, men who can and will sympathise with us and know our wants, and when this is done the time will soon come when the abominable laws which enable employers to have nearly everything their own way will soon be swept from the statute book...'.<sup>21</sup>

As the above resolution suggests, the key issue for trade unionists at the time of the 1874 election was the continuing existence of the Labour Laws. Halliday gave priority to the repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, freedom and equity of contract as between employer and worker and the abolition of criminal prosecutions for breach of contract in his election campaign. Morgan, however, argued for different policies, insisting to his readers that a vote for Halliday was a vote for freedom of thought, free trade, lower taxation, cheaper government, shorter Parliaments and the abolition of the inheritance laws of primogeniture. These represented older radical demands, increasingly becoming of less relevance to the urban workers of the early 1870's. Following Halliday's defeat, however, the amateur propagandist at the Workman's Advocate office admitted to his readers that his campaign on Halliday's behalf had been out of touch with the realities of the age.

'The separation of Church and State is not just now a working man's question. Our election was fought upon a wrong issue. The repeal of the unjust laws on labour are the most important questions of the day for us working men. We are not in danger of going to prison now for a break of contract with the parson, but we are with the employer'.<sup>22</sup>

21. *ibid.* 4 October 1873.

22. *ibid.* 14 February 1874.

Following this experience, which he outlined publicly with such candour, Morgan fell more and more into the mainstream of trade unionist politics.

The trade unions themselves played an important role in terms of writing to, paying for and distributing both the Examiner and the Workman's Advocate.<sup>23</sup> Conversely, local trade unionists found that sympathetic treatment of their activities in local labour newspapers could be of real, practical value to their organisations. Josiah Raybould of the Tamworth District of the A.A.M. praised the 'Examiner under its different names' for pleading 'the cause of working man better than any paper I have seen for twenty five years that I have been a union man'.<sup>24</sup> Fox, General Secretary of the Bristol, West of England and South Wales Amalgamated Labourers' Union (henceforth the A.L.U.) paid a similar tribute to the Examiner.

'If the men struck, the public was against them, if they were locked out, they were wrong then, they were always wrong in people's minds, and this feeling was peculiarly fomented by the press, there was more bitterness occasioned in people's minds through the press of this country than by any other means, and that was why he was glad to see their own paper started. He wished success to the Examiner, and could safely say that they would get more good by twelve months' reading of the Examiner than they would get in ten years from the daily papers'.<sup>25</sup>

The union also resolved that in order to

23. See Chapters Four and Five above, *passim*.

24. Potteries Examiner 6 September 1873.

25. Shropshire Examiner 20 June 1874.

'give the working man and public at large greater confidence, the transactions of the conference (of the union should be) done in the presence of a reporter from each of the working men's papers - the Examiner and the Workman's Advocate of Wales'.<sup>26</sup>

John Kane of the Ironworkers union referred to the Examiner as 'an advanced trade union organ',<sup>27</sup> although, strictly speaking, it was only a local newspaper, and Thomas Halliday of the A.A.M. referred particularly to the important roles played by the Beehive and the Workman's Advocate, 'published partly in Welsh and partly in English, at Merthyr',<sup>28</sup> at the closing conference of the union at Shrewsbury in August 1875. Even the working class radicals of the Forest of Dean Magna Chartist Committee recommended to their supporters

'the Englishman and the Forest of Dean Examiner as the only two papers that advocate the claims of working men besides the Bee-Hive and the Miners' Advocate'.<sup>29</sup>

The fact that many of these tributes appeared in the pages of the Examiner, and that they were clearly intended to advertise the paper, does not necessarily invalidate the sentiments expressed by them. Often they appeared in the general minutes of union meetings and conferences and of other public meetings, the records of which were kept only by journalists and preserved only in local newspapers. In 1873, for example, full committee meeting minutes of the A.A.M. Executive were provided for inclusion in the Examiner by Halliday himself. Similarly, in April 1874 full reports of the proceedings of the national conference of the A.A.M. were printed in the Examiner. Of more importance to trade union branches, however, was coverage of trade union affairs at the local level, particularly the printing of minutes and the advertising of union and mass meetings.

26. Miner and Workmen's Examiner 25 July 1874.

27. Potteries Examiner 19 May 1871.

28. Western Mail 27 August 1875.

29. Miner and Workmen's Examiner 3 July 1875.

This close working relationship between labour newspapers and local trade unions was cemented by the personal involvement of journalists in trade union affairs and local disputes. The producers of labour newspapers did not confine their endeavours to their newsrooms, and they took as active an interest in the development of trade unionism as they did in the promotion of radical politics.

Owen was described in one obituary notice as being both a 'Labour Leader and Journalist'<sup>30</sup>: 'he was a pioneer of modern ideas in industrial and political reform and in journalism'.<sup>31</sup> Owen's dual role is of great importance to an understanding of the success of the Examiner in the period between 1871 and 1876. As a journalist, he was no stranger to the world of trade union organisation. In the late 1860's he had begun to popularise the ideas of industrial arbitration developed by Mundella's Arbitration Board in Nottingham, and in 1872 read a paper to the Social Science Congress on the theme of industrial arbitration. After a prolonged campaign conducted both through the pages of the Potteries Examiner and the local trade unions, Owen succeeded in initiating a Potteries Board of Arbitration and Conciliation, and became its first secretary. This post retained close associations with the editorship of the Potteries Examiner, the Board's second secretary following Owen's departure for Wolverhampton being the Rev. T.D. Matthias. Owen was also associated with the young T.U.C., being a delegate to the Congress in 1869, and a member of the T.U.C.'s Parliamentary Committee in 1873.<sup>32</sup> On numerous occasions he addressed meetings held to encourage the growth of trade unionism among potters, ironworkers, nut and bolt makers, miners and women workers. Despite his commitment to the building of the A.A.M. between 1869 and 1875, he agreed at the time of the union's collapse to help build the new National Miners Union, and addressed meetings throughout the coalfields with MacDonald, William Brown and Timothy Mountjoy.<sup>33</sup> Owen,

30. Staffordshire Sentinel 14 October 1912.

31. *ibid.*

32. Also, in 1880 he was founding President of the National Order of Potters, and from 1893 to 1897 was president of the Potteries Trades Council.

33. Miner and Workmen's Examiner 31 July 1875.



therefore, approached the issue of trade unionism in the Examiner with considerable experience of their operation. He knew their leaders personally, and was himself accessible to their rank and file members.

A similar working relationship developed between J.T.Morgan and trade unionists in South Wales and the West of England. Again, the editor of the local labour newspaper was generally considered to be a 'labour leader'. In February 1874, for example, the A.L.U. held its first public meeting in Merthyr. Chaired by Isaac Conick, Merthyr's A.A.M. agent, in 'the unavoidable absence of the Rev. T.D.Matthias'<sup>34</sup>, the meeting was addressed by Morgan. In the following week a lodge of the union was opened at Merthyr, and a subsequent meeting held at the Lord Raglan Inn in Merthyr was chaired by Morgan.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, in July 1874 Morgan was unanimously elected President of the A.L.U.Conference at Bath.<sup>36</sup> At this conference, the union resolved to join the Federation of Agricultural and General Labourers' Union, formed in the winter of 1873. The Federation consisted of six labourers'unions, each sending delegates to form a national executive committee. It was hoped that this structure would enable the weaker unions to be supported and aided by the stronger, but without enforcing the rigid centralisation found in Joseph Arch's National Agricultural Labourers Union. Writing in the Workman's Advocate, Morgan supported the union's decision to seek affiliation to the larger body.

'We would like to see this spirit of federation spreading among all unions, both in England and in Wales, so that when a crisis takes place in trade, or when a lockout or a strike is threatened, that, through the Chief Executive, they could co-operate and give advice and help when it is necessary...No master would dare to lock out his men if he knew they would be supported by other men from other districts.'<sup>37</sup>

34. Workman's Advocate 14 February 1874.

35. ibid. 21 February 1874.

36. ibid. 11 July 1874.

37. ibid. 18 July 1874.

Morgan refused an offer to become the union's full time President, but accepted a post as one of the A.L.U.'s two general auditors.<sup>38</sup> The following year, after an internal struggle and the expulsion of five prominent leaders of the A.L.U., O'Neal, Dank, Staynings and Fox, Morgan was again elected President of the union conference. During this conference, in which delegates from Cardiff, Merthyr, Newport, Torquay, Exeter, Cleveland, Box, Bradford and Bristol were addressed at length by George Odger and Morgan, it was resolved to centralise all the union's funds.<sup>39</sup> For the first time, therefore, and in a period when miners and ironworkers were arguing for more federal trade union structures, the A.L.U. under Morgan's leadership attempted to become a truly 'amalgamated' union.

The federation of unions into larger, stronger units was the hub of Morgan's strategy for the labour movement. In Merthyr he pursued this path with zeal and, eventually, a degree of success. Immediately following the General Election of 1874, for example, he began a campaign to federate the town's labour and trade union organisations into a Trades Council. A series of articles in the Workman's Advocate spelt out the lessons to be drawn from the 'treachery' of the election at which Halliday had been defeated as a result of the disunity and fear of the workers. The defeat would never have occurred, Morgan argued, had all the unions been 'federated into one grand Union'.<sup>40</sup> There were in Merthyr at the time unions of miners, colliers, ironworkers, smiths and stokers, enginemen, printers, tailors, weavers, skimmers, labourers and shoemakers,<sup>41</sup> and in a number of articles Morgan explained the conditions under which they could federate together, and elaborated on questions of finance, delegation and functions.

By May 1874, Morgan had managed to persuade 'nearly every trade union in the district'<sup>42</sup> to send delegates to a Merthyr and Dowlais Trades

38. *ibid.* 18 July 1874.

39. *ibid.* 21 February 1874.

40. *ibid.* 21 February 1874.

41. *ibid.* 28 February 1874, Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr 17 October 1874.

42. Workman's Advocate 23 May 1874.

Council. The inaugural meeting was held in Merthyr on 4 June 1874, Morgan being its first secretary. Its first public act was to issue a warning through the pages of the Workman's Advocate 'To Working Men of all Trades (that) The Merthyr and Dowlais Trades Council strongly recommend the Cyfarthfa Ironworkers now on strike, as worthy of your sympathy and assistance'.<sup>43</sup> The Trades Council was to be of most value during the 1875 strike and lock-out of colliers and ironworkers, and it is a measure of its success that in February of that year the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, who had conducted disputes of their own in the town in October 1874 and February 1875 under the auspices of the Trade Council, contributed the relatively large sum of one hundred and twenty five pounds to the locked-out colliers fund, and affirmed that 'The locked-out men had the warmest sympathy of the journeymen tailors'.<sup>44</sup>

Morgan, like Owen, was deeply involved as a trade union activist, as well as a journalist, in the labour unrest of the early 1870's. As agitators, they threw their energies behind the building of new trade unions among colliers, ironworkers, potters, tinplate workers, metalworkers, women and general labourers. As journalists, they used their papers to advocate the claims of trade unions and to collect subscriptions, supply market prices and information about trade disputes. This close and mutually advantageous relationship, however, could only flourish whilst trade conditions were good and whilst the confidence of the workers who formed the readership of the papers was high.

Following the sharp down turn of industrial unrest in 1875, Owen reduced the size of his 'labour newspaper system' and in 1878 discontinued it altogether. The reasons for this terminal decline were manifold, but the most significant was that there was little agitational news to print in labour newspapers from 1875 onwards. In 1877, for example, a correspondent wrote

43. *ibid.* 18 July 1874.

44. Merthyr Telegraph 26 February 1895.

to the Miner complaining of the poor quality of industrial reports in the paper.

' There was a time when there was a paper which was said to be needed for working men. That was when trade was good, and labour better paid for. It did well then; but now adversity has fallen on our district, the paper is of little use to us, because we cannot hear of any improvement. There are no large meetings, no addresses....Now, sir, we have gone down in wages... and yet our paper has lost its tongue. No reports appear'.<sup>45</sup>

The editor's reply to the correspondent's complaint was terse and revealing:

'We suppose that our correspondent refers to the Examiner. If he will show us how we can report meetings and agitations that do not take place we shall be obliged .... Unfortunately, good trade will not come at the bidding of large meetings'.<sup>46</sup>

The crisis which editors of labour newspapers faced with the coming of economic depression in 1874-5 was a particularly severe one. If its full intensity is to be appreciated, a case study must be made which will explore the ways in which one editor engaged with the outside world during this difficult period of industrial decline. The discussion which follows, therefore, concerns the involvement of J.T.Morgan as a journalist and as a labour activist in the strike of colliers and ironworkers in South Wales in 1875.

If 1873 had been a year of optimism and the rapid growth of labour organisations, the late spring and summer of the following year witnesses an equally rapid decline of union membership. Hopes for the various schemes

45. The Miner 9 February 1877.

46. ibid.

of social amelioration which had been based on the trade unions evaporated as the organisations themselves began to collapse in internal dissension. For nine months before the disastrous strike and lock-out of 1875, the A.A.M. had been fraught with tensions and conflicts, each one eagerly capitalised upon by the anti-union press. The declining fortunes of trade unionism were met by misunderstood and often confused arguments, mutual recrimination and a sharply critical mood of rank and file dissent.

The debacle of 1875 was prefaced by a bitter secessionist revolt which swept through the miners' and the ironworkers' unions during the summer of 1874. Earlier in the year, Morgan had himself been party to this mood of regional trade union independence. In a report which he prepared about the T.U.C. Conference at Sheffield Morgan contemplated the question 'When shall we have a Trades Congress for Wales? ... Wales is sufficient for herself'.<sup>47</sup> Within three months, however, the condition of unionism in South Wales had begun to change. The iron industry slumped, coal profits were minimised and the tin-plate workers were locked-out. In this changed climate, the Workman's Advocate altered its pace. In place of suggesting policies to improve the structure or the quality of trade unionism, Morgan geared his agitation with a view to securing the survival of the movement itself.

From the spring of 1874 fewer subscriptions were being paid into union funds and union membership was falling. Kane's Ironworkers' Union fell from a strength of forty thousand nationally in 1873 to only one thousand four hundred in 1879.<sup>48</sup> and membership of the A.A.M. in South Wales fell from forty seven thousand, nine hundred and sixty five in March 1874.<sup>49</sup> to only twenty five thousand, eight hundred and ninety one in September of the same year.<sup>50</sup> Nationally, membership of the union fell from one hundred

47. Workman's Advocate 24 January 1878.

48. V.L.Allen, The Sociology of Industrial Relations, (1975), p.142.

49. Potteries Examiner 11 April 1874.

50. Merthyr Express. 17 October 1874.

and six thousand, three hundred and sixty eight to fifty seven thousand, seven hundred and sixty six in the same period.<sup>51</sup> This collapse was largely attributed to the depression in trade and to the special levies made for the support of the South Staffordshire strike and the Burnley lock-out.<sup>52</sup>

The union was financially weak by the autumn of 1874. In October, out of a national total of £18,500 owing to the central fund from the districts, the sum of £10,962 was due from the South Wales Branches. The two largest branches, Aberdare with three thousand six hundred members, and the Rhondda with two thousand, seven hundred and eight, owed £3,052 and £2,587 respectively.<sup>53</sup> The district union was clearly in acute crisis. Nine hundred members seceded from the Tredegar district alone between March and September 1874, whilst the Argoed branch fell from a healthy two hundred and seventy nine to a mere sixty four in the same period.<sup>54</sup> The Goginan and Penmaer branches had seceded altogether by October 1874.<sup>55</sup>

The causes of this disintegration occupied the thoughts of many trade unionists in South Wales. Much responsibility could be placed on the depression in trade, but there were other factors at work which prevented unions from adapting to such adverse conditions. Protests by South Wales colliers against the Executive Committee of the A.A.M. did not begin abruptly in the summer of 1874, nor were they entirely the result of financial considerations. Disagreements over the allocation of power within the union, and the extent of district autonomy, had been in evidence even before the A.A.M. had started to grow in the region. The keenest areas of contention involved the issues of apprenticeship and fees for new and unskilled labour into the coal mines. Of two surviving A.A.M. rulebooks for South Wales branches, both refer to the conditions under which new miners could be

51. Glasgow Sentinel 10 October 1874.

52. ibid. 10 October 1854.

53. Merthyr Express 17 October 1874.

54. Glasgow Sentinel 17 October 1874.

55. Wigan Observer 9 October 1874.

accepted for underground work. The Ogmore branch ruled that 'no person will be allowed to bring to work in the mine one that has not been before, unless he has first specified with the Mine Committee'.<sup>56</sup> A new collier, in the interests of the 'lives and comforts of the miners in general', would have to pay the union lodge sums of money which varied from £4 from a twelve to sixteen year old to £10 for an eighteen year old upwards, the sums to be paid in two stages.<sup>57</sup> No fee was required if new entrants were the sons of colliers or of miners, or of colliers' or miners' widows. The work of a new collier was also to be strictly supervised and controlled by the union. Furthermore, in order to prevent some of the ill-effects of unskilled labour and the 'butty' system of sub-contraction, it was laid down in the Ogmore rules that miners would not be allowed to gain more than two shillings a week from boys or day workers.<sup>58</sup> The Abersychan branch introduced similar apprenticeship clauses into their rule book,<sup>59</sup> and in January 1874, a mass meeting of colliers in the Rhondda adopted a resolution to the effect that no boy from the age of twelve to fourteen was to be taught to cut coal unless he paid a premium of £3., increasing to £5 for apprentices of seventeen or over. To ensure a rigid adherence to this resolution, the meeting decided that 'if any collier shall take on a boy or man in contravention of the above resolution, the whole body of colliers will strike against that person'.<sup>60</sup>

Neither the North Wales<sup>61</sup> nor the General Rulebooks of the A.A.M.<sup>62</sup> refer to apprenticeships, nor do they allow for any financial restriction of unskilled labour into the mines. At the Manchester A.A.M. Conference in April 1874, Henry Thomas of Aberdare and William Abraham (Mabon) of Loughor

56. Rules and Regulations of the Ogmore District A.A.M. (Aberaman 1873) P.R.O. FS7/4/172, p.29.

57. *ibid.* pp.30 - 34.

58. *ibid.* p.35.

59. 'Rules and Regulations for the Management of the Abersychan District of the A.A.M. and others engaged in mining operations (Wrexham 1873), P.R.O. FS7/4/128, *passim*.

60. Workman's Advocate 17 January 1874.

61. 'Rules for the Government of the North Wales District of the A.A.M.' (Wrexham, 1873) P.R.O. FS7/4/128.

62. 'General Rules for the Government of the A.A.M. (Walsall, October 1872), P.R.O. FS7/2/66.

raised the issue of the fee but were swiftly isolated by William Brown of North Stafford, G. Pickard of Cannock Chase and Thomas Halliday, President of the A.A.M. The South Wales colliers, Maban argued, were being threatened by the influx of agricultural labour and other unskilled workers into the pits. 'Practical Miners', he informed the delegates, 'did not want cobblers or agricultural workers to work in the pits.'<sup>63</sup> The Welsh resolution was defeated, and the peculiarities of Welsh coal mining ignored.<sup>64</sup> The sources of dissent which developed in South Wales within the miners' union were, therefore, built into the very diversity of work processes and conditions within the industry itself.

More tension, however, was to be generated by the A.A.M.'s style of leadership. The two wage reductions of ten per cent each during 1874 were accepted by the A.A.M. in the interest of maintaining unity and a stronger treasury. In parts of South Wales, the acceptance caused severe disillusion with the union's leadership. One letter in Y Fellten in November 1874, written in response to J.T. Morgan's adopted position on the matter, expressed this growing sense of dissatisfaction.

'The English rule the Welsh districts as they deem fit, and take care to distribute the money to their English brothers first, whilst the Welsh have the honour of returning to work on the masters terms, or fight for their rights independently of the union. In some areas the masters have accepted the just claims of the workers, whilst the Union's chief Executive Committee condemned the workers for staying out, advising them instead to return on the master's terms ... We shall unite, dear countrymen, unite together as one man, and we'll show the world that we can carry out the principles of Union independently of the English.'<sup>65</sup>

63. Wigan Observer 17 April 1874. See also D. Howell, Land and People in Nineteenth Century Wales, (1978), p.96-7.

64. Wigan Observer 17 April 1874.

65. Y Fellten 13 November, 1874.



The call was for a Welsh union. By keeping the money in Wales 'not only nominally, but under our own administration',<sup>66</sup> it was believed that the financial and administrative problem which lay at the heart of the disintegration of the A.A.M. in Wales would be solved.

Neither the union nor the suggested remedies were confined to the South Wales districts. In September 1874, delegates from the North Staffordshire district of the A.A.M., representing seven thousand members, decided unanimously to leave the A.A.M. and contact the more loosely organised 'National Society of Miners (sic), with a view to the district joining that body'.<sup>67</sup> The Wigan district also seceded following a motion of censure which was passed on Halliday and Pickard at St. Helens.<sup>68</sup> The Wigan colliers were angered by the two leaders' assurances to the West Lancashire Coal Masters Association that the demand for a wage reduction had been accepted by the A.A.M. members;<sup>69</sup> in fact, a delegate meeting had, shortly before the announcement, decided to reject the reduction by eighty one votes to six.<sup>70</sup> In the Forest of Dean, colliers were also leaving the A.A.M. because 'no more aid was to be expected from the Union in the present crisis'.<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, one observer pointed out that

'it is unlikely that the spirit of unionism has been lessened there, and they are ready to rejoin the union when reforms essential to the district's efficiency have been adopted'.<sup>72</sup>

Unlike these districts, South Wales did not secede from the A.A.M. as an organised, geographical contingent. Sections of more skilled workers employed by the Coalmasters did, however, withdraw together in the autumn of 1873,<sup>73</sup> gaining recruits throughout 1874. Finding 'no protection under the flag of the Amalgamated Association', enginemen left the A.A.M.

66. Tarian Y Gweithiwr 5 March 1874.

67. Workman's Advocate 25 September 1874.

68. Wigan Observer 3 Oct. 1874.

69. ibid 3 October 1874.

70. ibid. 3 October 1874.

71. Tarian Y Gweithiwr 12 February 1875.

72. ibid. 12 February 1875.

73. 'General Rules of the National United Association of Engineers, Firemen and Fitters, (Swansea, 1874), PRO, FS7/5/188.

to form the National United Association of Enginemen, Firemen and Fitters, a move which brought them into conflict with the A.A.M. One member of the new union wrote to the Workman's Advocate in January 1875 protesting that

'they think we are only children, to be handled about as they think proper. We will know that we are capable of looking after our own interest without any assistance from them.'<sup>74</sup>

The correspondent, however, added that

'If the A.A.M. were prepared to cooperate with the National United Association of Enginemen, Firemen and Fitters, we may do one another good some day or other.'<sup>75</sup>

Morgan was himself deeply implicated in the formation of this skilled union, despite his distaste for secessionism, and was named in the rulebook as the union's sole supplier of documents,<sup>76</sup> a feat remarkable in itself considering that the three most active areas of the union were Swansea, Llanelly and Llansamlet, on the extreme west of the steam coalfield.<sup>77</sup>

The tension which existed within the miners' union was, therefore, largely dependent upon the different requirements of districts and occupational groups, rather than initially at least, a consequence of cultural or nationalistic sentiments. Much less is known of the separatist faction within John Kane's Amalgamated Association of Malleable Ironworkers, other than that it did gain adherents, was rejected at the Merthyr Conference of the Union in July 1874,<sup>78</sup> and that the Executive Committee moved to expel the faction's leaders, Fred Evans of Rhymney, David Price, and William Gay, secretary of the Penydarren No.2 Lodge.<sup>79</sup> According to John Kane, these men had 'unionism on their lips, and hatred of everything that is not in their district.'<sup>80</sup> In return William Gay in particular launched a vitriolic

74. Workman's Advocate 29 January 1875.

75. *ibid.*

76. General Rules of the National United Association of Enginemen, Firemen and Fitters, *op.cit.* p.48.

77. *ibid.* p.1.

78. Workman's Advocate 11 July 1874.

79. *ibid.* 8 August 1874.

80. Ironworkers' Journal 1 September 1874.

campaign against South Wales Ironworker Agent, Philip Harris, on the union's high subscription and the lack of local control over local affairs, and attacked Kane's 'dogmatic Federation', and his contempt for smaller unions and 'unions other than his own.'<sup>81</sup> The debate within the Ironworkers' union was again centred on finance and decision making; and was ignited by the refusal of Welsh delegates to comply with a national decision which allowed for the financial support of unemployed members. The extent of their support is difficult to assess, but when moves were afoot to expel Fred Evans from the union, all six members of the Rhymney District Committee wrote to both the Western Mail and the Ironworkers' Journal pledging their support for his position.<sup>82</sup> Attempts to form a separate union, however, failed, and at a delegate meeting held at the Cross Keys Inn, Dowlais, in mid-September 1874, delegates voted to rejoin Kane's union.<sup>83</sup>

In both the miners' and the ironworkers' unions, therefore, tensions had built up against the leadership which focussed largely on firstly, financial and administrative control over district affairs, and secondly, the failure of Executive Committees to give firm leadership at a time of declining wage rates. The apparent problem of local action and national organisation was a difficult one for miners who had accepted the political economy of arbitration and conciliation, and of the centralised representation which they entailed. The debate and the paradox was further complicated by the intervention of forces hostile to trade unionism, who sought to capitalise on the mood and language of nationality which the secessionist movement in South Wales had, unwittingly perhaps, popularised. The West of England Examiner itself reflecting the concern of the Western Mail, was quick to inform its readers of the dangers involved in such outside intervention in its internal debate:

81. Workman's Advocate 8 August 1874.

82. Ironworkers' Journal 1 September, 1874.

83. ibid. 15 September 1874.

'Those who are altogether opposed to trade unionism find it convenient to fan any possible embers of discontent which may exist in the minds of Welsh unionists in respect of their connection with the English branch of the association.'<sup>84</sup>

Of the Welsh nonconformist press, Peter Williams' Merthyr Telegraph found particular relish in calling for a 'Wales for the Welsh'.

'The split in the miners' union and among the ironworkers is to be regarded with hope. It is an implication of a desire on the part of the men no longer to submit to foreign domination, but to strike a blow for freedom.'<sup>85</sup>

The language is heavy with allusion to the heroic national struggles of nineteenth century Europe which Merthyr's radical liberals had found so arresting and alluring. Its object in 1874, however, was to smash 'the Tyranny of the Union'.<sup>86</sup> As early as October 1874, the Merthyr Telegraph was predicting the 'beginning of the end of the A.A.M.', and reported the decline 'of paid agitation from Northern England'<sup>87</sup> among Welsh Ironworkers; Peter Williams informed the ironworkers that 'The days of alien agitation are numbered.'<sup>88</sup>

Morgan recognised the damage that such an attack was capable of inflicting on the ideas of national labour organisation, and acted accordingly. But in his uncritical defence of the trade union leaderships, he failed to understand or take account of the motives or the arguments of the secessionists. As far as he was concerned, the 'Red Dragon' unionists were engaging in futile and harmful discussion whilst the whole structure of the labour movement was collapsing: consequently, they were contributing to its demise. Morgan's campaign from the summer of 1874 was blunt and consistent.

84. West of England Examiner 30 May 1874.

85. Merthyr Telegraph 7 August 1874.

86. Merthyr Express 28 September 1874.

87. Merthyr Telegraph 8 November 1874.

88. ibid 27 November 1874.

'The seeds of dissension and discord are being very busily sown amongst all Trade Unionists in Wales just now. Our advice to all is Do not upon any account whatever become disunited - pay your contribution regularly into your lodges, and keep your Union and your lodge funds intact ... do not become disorganised.'<sup>89</sup>

In the Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr he further stressed the essential unanimity of purpose of both the Liberal press and the union secessionists:

'The hypocritical media, the Liberal (?) press, have planted a poisonous tree in the midst of the Union, sheltered by the Welsh banner - the Red Dragon ... Our strength lies in union with England; in independence lies our weakness and our destruction.'<sup>90</sup> Let Ireland have her independence and possess her own righteous home rule ... not so Cambria. As Englishmen and Welshmen "United we stand, Divided we Fall".<sup>91</sup>

At a meeting of colliers at Ystradgynlais in November 1874, Morgan spoke strongly against local and 'Red Dragon' unions, arguing that smaller unions were financially weaker, and less effectual in action. He then moved a vote of confidence in the A.A.M. His Ystradgynlais speech was roundly attacked by adherents of secessionist unionism, who claimed that he had misunderstood their arguments.<sup>92</sup> He did, however, receive valuable and influential support for his intransigent position. The Rev. T.D. Matthias, in June 1874, put the case for centralised national unions with characteristic eloquence for the Western Mail and the Ironworkers' Journal.

'The thought, the sentiment, the idea, the purpose of union was here for years, but it had no coherence, no central principle,

89. Workman's Advocate 8 August 1874.

90. Amddiffynydd Y Gweithiwr 22 August 1874.

91. Workman's Advocate 4 July 1874.

92. Y Felltten 13 November 1874: Amddiffynydd Y Gweithiwr 28 November 1874.

to combine and consolidate it. Then came Thomas Halliday and his compeers on the scene, and inaugurated a new condition of things. They collected the scattered atoms together and formed them into a compact body. Lodges and districts sprang up beneath the magic wand of this mighty Prospero - the Rhondda, the Aberdare, the Merthyr and other Welsh valleys became pregnant and astir with union ... Should Wales foolishly and suicidally now break away from England, their union will again be numbered with the things that have been, and all the labour, and toil, and energy - nay success - of the last four years will be quite thrown away.<sup>93</sup>

The debate in the miners' union troubled Morgan particularly because of the current ferocity of the employers offensive. After two wage reductions of ten per cent each in 1874, the Coal Owners demanded a third to take effect from the first day of 1875. Yet the miners' union was too weak to fight: the miners were not sufficiently united, they had neglected to pay their levies and contributions to their unions.<sup>94</sup> His first impulse was to urge the Coal Owners to take the dispute into arbitration, which he did through both his labour papers and through the Merthyr and Dowlais Trades Council. The venture failed, however, and he placed his papers at the service of the colliers, vowing to 'support the miners by every legal means within (his) power, both morally and financially.'<sup>95</sup> Morgan realised that the impending dispute would be crucial for the union and for all his aspirations. It was, he wrote,

'a determined and desperate game. On one hand we have wealth, power, privilege shifting the knights and castles upon the arena of conflict; and on the other we have the pawns in close array and compact order, refusing to be overcome and swept away

93. Ironworkers Journal 15 June 1874.

94. Workman's Advocate 4 December 1874.

95. ibid. 1 January 1875.

The crusade which we are engaged in is too sacred, momentous and majestic to be neglected and betrayed. Union in South Wales is on its trial.<sup>96</sup>

Thomas Halliday also appealed to the Coal Masters for arbitration 'with a view of finding some mode by which the struggle might be averted.'<sup>97</sup> Fothergill, Davies and Dalziel of the Owners' Association, however, refused the A.A.M.'s request. In response to this crisis, the A.A.M.'s executive passed a resolution on 19 December 1874 to the effect that since the union was so depleted in South Wales, they could not pledge support to the colliers of South Wales in resisting the reduction.<sup>98</sup> Yet, the retreat was to be an honourable one. The men should not return, the A.A.M. argued, until the principle of arbitration had been accepted by the masters, or until the owners had explained to their colliers why the reduction was necessary. Halliday and Pickard were nominated by the Executive to attend a colliers' general delegate meeting at Merthyr on Monday, 28 December 1874 to explain the Executive's position, and to propose further conciliation schemes. In the event, conciliation was also rejected by the Coal Owners' Association, but what was of greater significance was the mood of the colliers' delegates at Merthyr, and their response to the advice of the leaders of the A.A.M. Halliday told the delegate meeting that they were to choose between returning to work and 'to the old way of doing things',<sup>99</sup> or to 'act like men', and to declare their determination not to submit until facts justifying the owners' case had been explained to them. The delegates, however, chose a third option. Having put the matter to a vote, eleven thousand, seven hundred and four decided to accept Halliday's advice to agitate for a conciliatory conclusion to the dispute, whilst twenty seven thousand six hundred and eleven voted to 'resist to the uttermost' the ten per cent wage reduction demanded

96. *ibid.* 20 June 1874.

97. Western Mail 8 April 1874.

98. *ibid.*

99. Workmen's Advocate 1 January 1875.

of them. Only three thousand, five hundred and fifty voted to submit, most of whom did so, Isaac Connick, Merthyr A.A.M. agent explained, on the tactical grounds that the strike should be delayed until winter was over. No notice was returned from eight thousand, six hundred and eighty seven miners, whilst a further four hundred declared their neutrality. Thus over fifty three per cent of the fifty two thousand and seven colliers represented at the Merthyr Conference of 28 December 1874 had resolved to resist any further wage reduction under any circumstances. Halliday's alternative had been firmly rejected by men who had long been dissatisfied with the A.A.M.'s leadership and structure. An angry Halliday informed the delegates that when he needed to communicate with them, he would do so through the Workman's Advocate.<sup>100</sup>

Returning to his Executive, Halliday moved that all of the A.A.M.'s members connected to ironwork collieries were to return to work on the reduction to assist the ironmasters on their own asking.<sup>101</sup> Consequently, of the seventeen thousand A.A.M. members in South Wales, fourteen thousand did not take part in the strike, despite the decision of 28 December.<sup>102</sup> Only three thousand A.A.M. members remained in the House and Steam Coal Collieries of Aberdare, Rhondda, Neath, Loughor, Swansea Vale, Abertillery, Abersychan, Cwmbran, Blaenavon, Caerphilly, Bedwas, Pengam, Bargoed, Blackwood, New Tredegar, Darren and Vochriw, of whose fortysix thousand, six hundred and ninety five colliers, twenty five thousand, five hundred and forty went on strike from 1 January 1875.<sup>103</sup> One month later, eleven thousand, nine hundred and eighty colliers connected to the ironworks of Merthyr, Dowlais, Old Tredegar, Sirhowy, Ebbw Vale, Victoria, Rhymney, Cwmavon and Swansea were locked out because of the continuing strike.<sup>104</sup>

The ironworkers were also facing threat of wage reductions. At a large meeting at the Craven Arms, Merthyr, on 29 December, 1874, Thomas Halliday, J.T.Morgan and two Ironworkers' Agents,, Phillip Harris and G.C.Thomas,

100. *ibid.*

101. Western Mail 8 April 1875.

102. *ibid.*

103. Workman's Advocate 21 May, 1875.

104. Western Mail 8 April 1875.



delivered 'stirring addresses upon the necessity and advantages of Union amongst working men',<sup>105</sup> passing a vote of confidence in the National Amalgamated Association of Malleable Ironworkers. Meanwhile, John Kane was preparing his organisation for the coming crisis. With John D. Prior of the Manchester Amalgamated Carpenters and Joiners and Robert Knight of the Liverpool Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders, Kane argued that what was really needed was not a system of trades councils, but a Federal Union of existing societies which were organised on sound financial principles, contributing to a common fund which could become available to any group in dispute which merited their sympathy and assistance. Unless this course was taken immediately by the amalgamated trades, Kane warned, 'the employers and the Capitalist federated unions' would be sufficiently strong to 'battle down in detail the whole of the Unions in the country.'<sup>106</sup>

In parts of South Wales, however, many ironworkers and colliers were already being 'battled down'. The strike and lock-out which commenced in January and February of 1875 brought distress to many already impoverished mining communities, and workers and their families organised to contend not with employers, but with the dispensers of poor relief. The authorities became understandably alarmed at the implication of the combined strike and lock-out on public order. On 26 January 1875, C. Talbot, Lord Lieutenant of Glamorgan, asked the Secretary of State what his military powers were to be in the event of civil disturbance among 'the working classes in the manufacturing districts of this country'.<sup>107</sup> The anticipated disturbances broke out in mid-February, when a riot at Dowlais brought in one hundred and fifty Police Constables,<sup>108</sup> and alerted military detachments of Newport and Brecon.<sup>109</sup> The unrest was caused primarily by the apparent collusion of the

105. Workman's Advocate 8 January 1875.

106. *ibid.*

107. C. Talbot to Secretary of State, 26 January 1875 P.R.O. Ho45/9377/41103.

108. G.T. Clark to Secretary of State, 22 February 1875 *op.cit.*

109. P.C. Montgomery to Under Secretary of State, 22 February 1875 *op.cit.*

coal and ironmasters with the Merthyr Board of Guardians, three out of whose four overseers were closely identified with local industrialists: Matthews Bates was a coal agent at Cyfarthfa, George Martin, mineral agent of Dowlais and William Harris, a 'monopolist grocer and colliery owner'.<sup>110</sup> On Monday, 22 February, a 'tumultuous mob'<sup>111</sup> crowded the market place at Merthyr, and according to A. de Rutzen, the stipendiary magistrate, threatened to use violence and to attack the shops.<sup>112</sup> The crowd was, he wrote 'like gunpowder that a mere accidental spark might explode.'<sup>113</sup> The following fortnight witnessed more 'extreme insubordination'<sup>114</sup> in the Board of Guardians' workyards. The men who were forced to break stones there grew sullen and threatening, doing little or none of the prescribed work. By 11 March, G.T. Clark, Chairman of the Board of Guardians, informed the Secretary of State that 'the whole system of exacting labour for relief had broken down.'<sup>115</sup>

Later that week, the Board of Guardians informed a number of colliers who were receiving relief that they were to apply for work at the Dowlais office, where thirty men were required to cut coal for the maintenance of the pit pumping engines. They were also informed that if any refused, their names would be struck off the relief lists. The thirty colliers involved refused. Yet when Relieving officers attempted to cut their relief, they found 'so much opposition that they could do nothing.'<sup>116</sup> Encouraged by this victory, a great 'demonstration of stone-breakers'<sup>117</sup> walked out of the Guardian work-yards, to whom the powerless Committee also gave way.

The following Monday the streets around the Merthyr workhouse were again crowded 'to an unusual extent'.<sup>118</sup> A heavily augmented police force and alerted detachments of troops waited for the Guardians to reimpose their

111. G.T.Clark to Secretary of State, 21 March 1875 op.cit.

112. *ibid.*

113. *ibid.*

114. *ibid.*

115. *ibid.*

116. Cambrian 19 March 1875.

117. *ibid.*

118. *ibid.*

order. Again the colliers refused to enter the services of the Dowlais coalmasters, and again the 'bulk of single men'<sup>119</sup> refused to enter the workhouse. They were all struck off the relief list.

The Workman's Advocate warmly commended the colliers' action.

Morgan assured the workers of Merthyr that

'If we are to starve, we'll starve together. Do not make a mistake gentlemen, we are none of us afraid of our lives, we are only afraid to tarnish our characters as honest workmen by becoming traitors.'<sup>120</sup>

Whether the absence of rioting at this critical juncture may be attributed to the characters of 'honest workmen' or to the greatly strengthened forces of law in the town is open to some conjecture. R.H.Rhys, senior Acting Magistrate for Aberdare and a member of the Merthyr Board of Guardians, was convinced that had there not been such precautionary measures taken, the situation 'might and probably would have resulted in rioting and bloodshed.'<sup>121</sup> Rhys was, however, a worried man who needed to justify his call for troops. The incident of March 1875 was the first of its kind since the 'Election Riots' of December 1868 at Abersychan, Pontypool, Blaenavon, Blackwood<sup>122</sup> and Newport, where the military had fatally wounded one Mrs. Grant,<sup>123</sup> and had consequently outraged much public opinion in South Wales.<sup>124</sup> Furthermore Alexander Macdonald had made it known that he was about to raise the issue in Parliament, seeking an enquiry into the affair.<sup>125</sup>

Characteristically, Morgan supported the militant attitude taken by the Merthyr colliers, but chaired a mass meeting on the Tuesday following the confrontation of Monday 15 March, attended by two thousand Merthyr workers,

119. *ibid.*

120. Workman's Advocate. 19 March 1875.

121. R.H.Rhys to Secretary of State, 20 March 1875. *op.cit.*

122. Monmouthshire Merlin 5 December 1868, *Star of Gwent*.

123. H.A.Bruce to Home Department, 11 December 1868, P.R.O., H.O. 45/8111.

124. Monmouthshire Merlin 5 December 1868.

125. R.H.Rhys to Secretary of State, 20 March 1875. P.R.O. HO45/9377/41103.

at which he warned against agents provocateurs, threatening letters and the use of violence which were, he told them, all 'masters' plots'.<sup>126</sup> But even had there been some truth in this, Morgan's warnings came too late, for the affay of 15 March had in reality been a signal triumph for the Board of Guardians. Although there was a determination in abundance among the colliers, their relief had been withheld and their funds were exhausted. They faced starvation, and Alexander MacDonald appealed to his Scottish colliers for aid.

'Be not led away by the reports in certain parts that the struggle in South Wales is soon to end. My reports daily are that the men, notwithstanding all the poverty and misery they are enduring, are firm and determined. Their saying is that they may as well fight it out now as again in a few months. They have no faith in their employers. Let me ask you to try to aid the poor men in their struggle.'<sup>127</sup>

In Aberdare, where Richard Fothergill's ironworks had lain idle for over twelve months, Philip Harris reported that the men were 'actually in a state of starvation'.<sup>128</sup> Although a General Relief Committee had been formed to collect funds for the ironworkers and colliers of South Wales by the Merthyr and Dowlais Trades Council, Harris protested that the bulk of the funds collected were going to the colliers.<sup>129</sup> The Ironworkers union itself contributed one thousand, five hundred and seventy pounds to the lock-out fund, bringing to a total of sixteen thousand, two hundred and forty nine pounds their aid for South Wales members since January 1875.<sup>130</sup> Workman's Advocate / Amddi/ffynydd y Gweithiwr concluded that its principal task during the dispute was to organise financial relief. Morgan appealed for contributions to the

126. Workman's Advocate 19 March 1875.

127. Cambrian 19 March 1875.

128. Workman's Advocate 22 January 1875.

129. ibid. 12 March 1875.

130. Ironworkers' Journal 1 June 1875.

Trades Council fund, which he and W.R.Jones, treasurer, supervised,<sup>131</sup> and to the paper's own subscription lists for 'locked-out Colliers, Ironworkers and Labourers.'<sup>132</sup> Sums were received from W.E.Forster, Charles Darwin and a large number of local publicans and shopkeepers.<sup>133</sup> Most financial support, however, came from other trade unions. The A.S.E. sent one thousand pounds,<sup>134</sup> the London Operative Bricklayers two hundred pounds<sup>135</sup> and Joseph Arch's N.A.L.U. twenty pounds.<sup>136</sup> The London Trades Council sent George Odger down to Merthyr to inquire into the lock-out, where he addressed a meeting 'crowded to excess', chaired by the editor of the Workman's Advocate.

Odger found that, by mid-May, despite the poverty and the inadequate funds, thirty seven thousand, five hundred and twenty colliers remained either on strike or were locked-out, whilst only nineteen thousand, two hundred and seventy five were at work. Nearly four thousand had left South Wales, mainly from Rhondda, Merthyr, Dowlais and Cwmavon.<sup>137</sup> By this time, however, it was clear that most were willing to accept arbitration or even the ten per cent reduction.<sup>138</sup> Distress was acute and omnipresent. John Kane declared ominously that 'Death by Starvation, should be the heading of every article that is written on the labour question in South Wales....'<sup>139</sup>

At Dowlais, colliers were slowly drifting back to work. Morgan chaired an emergency meeting of between a thousand and one thousand two hundred to discuss the breaking of ranks, at which William Williams of Abercanaid made a passionate plea for a united front, for a 'decision one way or another.'<sup>140</sup> In the third week of May, all of Dowlais had returned and increasing victimisation was forcing Merthyr back as well. The colliers

- 131. Workman's Advocate 8 May, 1875.
- 132. ibid 19 February 1875.
- 133. Workman's Advocate 26 March 1875.
- 134. ibid 5 March 1875.
- 135. ibid 19 March 1875.
- 136. ibid. 5 March 1875.
- 137. ibid 21 May 1875.
- 138. ibid 21 May 1875.
- 139. Ironworkers' Journal. 1 April 1875.

of North Wales, who had struck against a reduction of fifteen per cent, returned to work pending a Board of Arbitration ruling. In South Wales generally, the colliers' strike was also weakening.

William Abraham, who by 1875 was rapidly rising in what remained of the miners' union, urged the acceptance of any reasonable terms.<sup>141</sup> E.W.Evans argues that in doing so he heroically pitted himself in opposition to Halliday, and, using only Mabon's recollection as evidence, suggested that Halliday advocated a militant fighting policy. Unfortunately he does not expand on this interesting point; Mr. Evans also seems to accept Mabon's claim that Halliday obstructed the negotiations for arbitration with the employers.<sup>142</sup> Yet Halliday's request for arbitration had been rejected by the coal masters as early as December 1874; furthermore, not only did Halliday not advocate a 'fighting policy', he denounced the strike at the April 1875 A.A.M. Conference at Swansea. In his opening address he emphasised that of the fifteen thousand men involved in the strike from the Rhondda and Aberdare valleys, indeed of the twenty five thousand, five hundred and forty involved from the strike area as a whole, only three thousand, two hundred belonged to the A.A.M.<sup>143</sup> Halliday continued:

'It is not true that the Amalgamated Association advised the men to strike, because it was well known that the funds were not sufficient to justify them in so doing ... It was not, then, union men who were the promoters of the attitude assumed in the Rhondda and Aberdare Valleys. It was the non-union men. The union men were carried away by an overwhelming flood ... The union did not cause the strike which

141. E.W.Evans, Mabon : William Abraham 1842-1922 , (Cardiff 1959), p.11.

142. *ibid.* p.12.

143. Western Mail 8 April 1875.

for good or ill was the spontaneous movement of the men, acting without any reference whatever to the principles of unionism.<sup>144</sup>

Furthermore, one month before the alleged clash with Mabon, Halliday had advised the colliers of South Wales, from the Swansea Conference to 'go to work at once at the reduction of ten per cent, leaving it to arbitrators to decide whether it is justified by events.'<sup>145</sup> Mabon's posturing apart, therefore, it is clear that he, Halliday and Morgan believed that the 1875 strike was fought over principles, not wages. In Mabon's words it was 'not in reality a strike for money but for a principle, namely the right of workmen to have a voice in the sale of labour.'<sup>146</sup> Morgan expressed the same sentiment in the Workman's Advocate the week following the end of the colliers' lock-out. He congratulated the colliers for securing a 'Triumph of Reason over Force.'<sup>147</sup> A delegation of colliers had finally been allowed to meet the employers, and had negotiated a settlement, not of a ten per cent as originally demanded, but of a twelve and a half per cent reduction. 'But then', he assured his readers 'the reduction was not really what the men fought against.' The long fight had been over the 'principle of arbitration.'<sup>148</sup>

Morgan agreed with Thomas Halliday that the strike had been caused by disunity and uncontrolled militancy. Only a strong union could have prevented a strike, they argued. The task at hand, therefore, was to rebuild the trade union, repay the English unions who contributed funds to the striking and locked-out colliers and to generally ensure that the workers of South Wales would never again be as 'disunited as they were at the close of 1874'.<sup>149</sup>

The Workman's Advocate/Amddiffynnydd y Gweithiwr carried the same message,

144. *ibid* 8 April 1875.

145. *ibid*.

146. E.W.Evans, Mabon, op.cit. p.13.; Tarian y Gweithiwr, 12 March 1875.

147. Workman's Advocate 28 May 1875.

148. *ibid*. 28 May 1875.

149. *ibid* 25 June 1875.

urging workers of all grades to join, or to remain in, the larger stronger trade unions. The nonconformist press again launched their attacks on the renewed agitation. 'Halliday, Harris, Morgan and Co.' one correspondent protested 'Would keep the world a continual boil to answer their selfish ends'.<sup>150</sup>

The two months following the end of the lock-out were indeed ones of 'continual boil' for activists eager to rebuild the movement from the ruins of the spring of 1875. In late June, Morgan was attempting to reconcile the warring districts of Blaenavon who struck and Dowlais who did not, and was also exhorting the ironworkers of Ebbw Vale to strengthen their union funds.<sup>151</sup> At Swansea one week later he appealed to the Independent Tinplatemakers to improve their association, and at Merthyr during the same week attended with Halliday and Macdonald a delegate meeting representing forty thousand colliers, called to decide the Conciliation Board delegation: ironwork colliers were not represented.<sup>152</sup> Thomas Halliday toured the branches of Llwynycoed, Aberdare and Tredegar where resolutions were passed in favour of rejoining the A.A.M. Rumours were circulating that Fothergill was about to resign his seat at Merthyr, and Halliday agreed to re-stand at a forthcoming bye-election.<sup>153</sup>

For the colliers of South Wales, however, the defect of May 1875 was an extremely serious one, and despite the high level of agitational activity, non-unionism was spreading rapidly. Morgan described the condition of South Wales workers as 'apathetic' and 'torpid'.

'The large majority of the colliers seem to be content just now to work for starvation wages, and to submit to any condition those claiming to be their Lords and Masters think fit to impose.'<sup>154</sup>

150. Merthyr Express 17 July 1875.

151. Workman's Advocate 2 July 1875.

152. ibid 9 July 1875.

153. ibid.

154. ibid. 30 July 1874.



Morgan reaffirmed his confidence in the A.A.M., to which, if

'men of Wales and other places had only been true .. we have no doubt that the South Wales coalowners would never have provoked the late strike ... and lock-out.'<sup>155</sup>

Nevertheless, he advised the colliers of South Wales to further protect their interests by helping to form a new national union.<sup>156</sup>

The reference was to Alexander MacDonald's recently reformed miners' union, the N.A.M., and Isaac Connick, Merthyr's A.A.M. agent, spoke in favour of this new Union at a meeting of Dowlais colliers, chaired by Morgan on 2 August 1875.<sup>157</sup> Connick understood that August and September of 1875 were to be crucial months for the coal miners of South Wales, and that the forthcoming Conciliation Board made the task of stemming the tide of non-unionism an extremely urgent one. Since the principle of a formalised sliding scale of wages had been accepted by both masters and men at the May negotiations, it became imperative for the colliers to be organised and strong enough to exert some degree of pressure on the Coal Owners' Association. In August, the prospect of a favourable basis for the Sliding Scale was bleak: the masters were demanding a return to the 1858 wage and price levels, whilst the nomination of Alexander MacDonald the colliers' key negotiator on the Conciliation Board, was being opposed by Owners' representative H.H.Vivian. Despite protests, MacDonald chose to resign his nomination, although he remained as an advisor. Meanwhile, the agitation for reviving trade unionism continued. Delegates representing between forty and fifty thousand colliers met at Merthyr in mid-September to recommend

'that all the colliers and miners in South Wales and Monmouthshire who have not yet joined the N.A.M. to do so without any further delay.'<sup>158</sup>

155. *ibid.* 30 July 1875.

156. *ibid.* 30 July 1875.

157. *ibid.* 6 August 1875.

158. *ibid.* 24 September 1875.

It was also decided to invite both Halliday and Macdonald to tour South Wales. Early in October, the two leaders addressed meetings at Pontypool, Swansea, Aberdare, and on Monday evening 10 October spoke to a meeting of five thousand colliers at Merthyr. Here Halliday advised the colliers to join the new National Union, and advocated emigration 'as a means of relieving this country of all its surplus labour'.<sup>159</sup> Mabon proposed a vote of confidence in the new union, as Macdonald told the Welsh colliers to manage their own affairs and to form a National Union for Wales, federated with the one over which he presided, 'and to husband their money'.<sup>160</sup>

Consequently, at another delegate meeting held at Merthyr on 18 October, it was decided to form a centralised union in South Wales, with a central negotiating board to be based at Pontypridd. It was even intended to publish twenty thousand rulebooks for the new union, twelve thousand of them in Welsh. George Coles, A.A.M. agent for the Rhondda, told colliers at Cwmdare on 29 September that the new Miners' National Association presented to Welsh colliers the advantages which had previously been demanded, namely a 'Welsh union, managed by Welshmen residing in Wales, and who kept the money at home'.<sup>161</sup> The District's union was, however, to 'retain its links with the English miners',<sup>162</sup> making possible an organisational structure which allowed for decentralised negotiation and, if necessary, centralised action: much the same formula as that expounded thirty seven years later by the Unofficial Reform Committee.<sup>163</sup> Samuel Davies, A.A.M. agent for Aberdare, put the argument for accepting the new structure succinctly:

'Since the National Union had been formed, the Monmouthshire and South Wales branch had the management of their own affairs, and whenever they required any assistance from other districts, it was ready at hand.'<sup>164</sup>

159. *ibid.* 15 October 1875.

160. *ibid.* 15 October 1875.

161. *ibid.* 1 October 1875.

162. *ibid.* 1 October 1875.

163. Unofficial Reform Committee, *The Miners' Next Step*, (1912) (1973 edn),

164. Merthyr Telegraph 4 February 1875.

Unfortunately, however, the new centralised structure did not materialise in South Wales. As late as December 1875, the Manchester Conference of the N.A.M. sent Pickard and Halliday to South Wales to help form the long awaited Central Union, but by April 1876 when a Conference of the new branch was finally held, and at which, incidentally, Mabon was elected President, membership had fallen to a mere four thousand.<sup>165</sup> Under such circumstances, and despite the opposition of house coal colliers,<sup>166</sup> there was little alternative to accepting the sliding scale agreement of December 1875. This scale fixed wages at 1869 levels plus five per cent to a selling price of twelve shillings per ton of steam coal and eleven shillings per ton of bituminous coal. For each movement of one shilling per ton in prices, wage rates were to be altered by seven and a half per cent relative to the standard, or about two pence per ton in cutting prices.<sup>167</sup> The principle of assessing wages on the selling price of coal was not new to the industry; in Aberdare for example the basic wage rate for cutting one ton of large coal had changed twenty two times between 1848 and 1875.<sup>168</sup> Yet the formalised sliding scale of 1875 was to remain in operation for the following twenty seven years.

The A.A.M. itself had, in the meantime, been quietly dissolved at the Shrewsbury Conference in late August 1875.<sup>169</sup> Like Owen, Halliday and the agents of the late A.A.M. in South Wales, Morgan came to accept the fresh circumstances and to advocate the cause of MacDonald's union.<sup>170</sup> With their principal support system in ruins, however, Morgan's labour newspapers survived only for a further five months.

165. E.W.Evans, Mabon, op.cit, p.17.

166. Merthyr Express 8 January 1876.

167. B.Evans, 'A History of the Trade Disputes and the Formation and Operation of the several Sliding Scale Agreements in the South Wales Coal Trade, (Unpub.M.A. thesis, Cardiff, 1944) passim; E.W.Evans op.cit., pp. 18-9.

168. L.J.Williams, 'The Coal Owners of South Wales 1873-80. Problems of Unity', Welsh History Review, Vol.8, No.1, 1976.

169. Western Mail 27 August 1875.

170. Workman's Advocate 1 October 1875, for example.

The above case study reveals the extent to which Morgan and his papers were integrated into the labour agitation in South Wales. Morgan's activities as a journalist and as an agitator were of crucial importance in developing and cementing this close relationship between newspaper and reader, and his rearguard action against non-unionism was fought with equal vehemence on public platforms as it was in the pages of his papers. The Workman's Advocate and Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr, therefore, were integral elements of the unrest, their sole function being to further its aims and secure its objectives.

ii) Ideas and organisation.

In so far as the issues of radical politics and trade unionism were concerned, therefore, the editors evidently took a lively interest in, and were personally involved with, struggles which were conducted within the working class communities where their papers circulated. In addition to their physical interventions in such struggles, Owen and Morgan also used their papers as political weapons. Their collective aim as journalists was to advocate and to popularise the demands of a relatively neglected section of the local population. Owen described the main outlines of his editorial policy as follows:

'As an avowed advocate of Trades Unions we shall seek to make our columns the special mouthpiece of these organisations in all that affects the INTERESTS OF LABOUR'.<sup>171</sup>

In defiance of other local and national newspapers, the Examiner was pressed firmly into the services of a 'class'. Owen complained that he had

171. Wednesbury, WestBromwich and Darlaston Examiner, 19 September, 1876.

'seen clearly that the great majority of existing newspapers have leaned on the side of the employing class, if they have not directly made themselves the exponents of capitalist views; and not unnaturally that has led to the wish for journals that would place the ideas of working men fully and firmly before their own class, the employing class and the general public'.<sup>172</sup>

Other early editions of the Examiner also presented arguments in favour of a newspaper press which was independent of 'capitalist' control.

'The West of England Examiner is purely and simply a working man's paper; it has no half dealings with other classes, no subserviency to other ranks of society; it can afford to be independent, for it has no other tastes to consult, to be honest, for it has no other power to fear'.<sup>173</sup>

Ultimately, Owen wrote of the Potteries Examiner

'The object of this journal, which belongs to the working class, is, as stated on the title page, to further the interests of labour'.<sup>174</sup>

Similarly, Morgan argued that the purpose of his Workman's Advocate was to

'get for our class - the largest and most important class in the community - fairplay, even handed justice, and the natural and indefeasible rights which are ours'.<sup>175</sup>

Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr also declared its independence from the established political parties

172. Forest of Dean Examiner 2 August 1873.

173. West of England Examiner 31 May 1874.

174. Potteries Examiner 24 February 1872.

175. Workman's Advocate 3 December 1875.

'Nid yw y papur (hwn) yn proffesu ei hun yn Dori na yn Rhddfrydwr, ond rhyw blaid newydd eithafol sydd wedi codi yn ddiweddar, sef plaid y Gweithwyr, sef y radicals mwyaf radicalaidd

This paper does not profess to be either Tory or Liberal, rather it is the paper of a new extremist party, the workers' party, the most radical of the radicals'.<sup>176</sup>

By way of emphasising this commitment the editors frequently reaffirmed their editorial independence. 'A free and unfettered press' was in their view 'an implacable and sleepless foe' of all forms of injustice.<sup>177</sup> One leader in the Potteries Examiner demanded 'for the "Fourth Estate" freedom and carte blanche everywhere'.<sup>178</sup> Such statements reveal important aspects of the radical press tradition within which both editors worked.

The grand theory of the Fourth Estate emerged out of the struggles for legality of the cheap press during the first half of the nineteenth century. Its credibility, as George Boyce has argued, remained principally in the apparent independence of the press from the organisations of party politics. Thus the theory

'enabled the British press to stake a claim for a recognised and respectable place in the British political system ... and to justify breaking away from government repression and subsidies'.<sup>179</sup>

This autonomy was zealously protected against any form of compromise with, or subservience to, any social or political power base. Delane warned in 1852 of the precariousness of their hard won independence, and predicted

176. Amddiffynnydd y Gweithiwr 22 August 1874.

177. Potteries Examiner 24 April 1875.

178. *ibid.*

179. G. BOYCE; 'The Fourth Estate: the reappraisal of a concept', in G. Boyce, J. Curran, P. Wingate (Eds.), Newspaper History from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day, (1978), pp. 26-27.

the 'trammeling' of the

'dignity and the freedom of the press ... from the moment it accepts an ancillary position'.<sup>180</sup>

The press, Delane continued, could enter into no close or binding alliance with the representatives of political power, nor could it 'surrender its permanent interests to the convenience of the ephemeral power of any government'.<sup>181</sup>

Editors of labour newspapers shared the view that they were engaged in the creation of an independent force with its own distinct set of attitudes. Owen, writing in the first edition of the Wednesbury, WestBromwich and Darlaston Examiner, asserted that

'our object is to supply what popular opinion has long regarded as a great desideratum, a journal subsidised by no political party, independent on personal considerations and influences ... to carry out this purpose we shall strive to supply from time to time UNGARNISHED, THOROUGHLY INDEPENDENT AND FAITHFUL reports of all public meetings taking place in the district, as well as a general record of the news of the day'.<sup>182</sup>

Similarly, the Workman's Advocate was, according to its editor, 'a guide, guardian and instructor, and not a servile vassal, or a truckling adulatory time server'.<sup>183</sup> Implied in the pronouncements of both editors was the suggestion that their local competitors were both servile and time serving.

The concept of the Fourth Estate outlined the character of the press in the nineteenth century as being an independent

'guardian, having its own opinions, pressing them on its readers, directing their attention on the matters it thought fit and ... in a political context shaping its

180. Quoted in The Press and the People. Eighteenth Annual Report of the Press Council, Autumn 1971, p.69.

181. The Press and the People (1971) op.cit., p.69.

182. Wednesbury, WestBromwich and Darlaston Examiner 19 September 1876.

183. Workman's Advocate 6 September 1873.

readers opinions'.<sup>184</sup>

It may be open to question whether a newspaper ever succeeds in 'shaping its readers opinions',<sup>185</sup> but in leader columns and elsewhere it is apparent that the editors of labour newspapers did attempt to influence their readers' views. The object of the Examiner as Owen envisaged it, was

'to be a schoolmaster to our class ... to teach it  
to go down, deep into its own consciousness ... (to)  
call forth latent working-class thought and ... to find  
a means for the expression of that thought'.<sup>186</sup>

Thus a wide range of issues were discussed in these papers. In many cases, however, editors tended to couch discussions of important themes or events in the language of basic trade unionism. During the Paris Commune of 1871, for example, Owen argued in response to a republican correspondent that 'the franchise is the training ground for an English republic', and that furthermore a National Government in Britain could best be brought into existence by building 'a general workmen's council, such as the Trades Congress was, debating the questions of the day most interesting to their class ... then they will help to bring about in England such a republic as never existed in the world before'.<sup>187</sup> A similar process of political reductionism may be seen in Owen's treatment of the Irish Home Rule issue in the Examiner. Upon being invited to address a Home Rule demonstration in Tunstall and Burslem, he admitted to being 'not quite decided on the Home Rule issue'.<sup>188</sup> His speech, therefore, consisted of an appeal to workers on both sides of the Irish Channel to become trade unionists.<sup>189</sup>

184. C. Seymour-Ure, The Press, Politics and the Public, (1968), p.18.

185. C. Seymour-Ure argues that 'newspapers have only a very limited type of political influence over the mass of their readers', op.cit., (1968), p.302.

186. Potteries Examiner 24 February 24 February 1872.

187. *ibid.* 31 March 1871

188. *ibid.* 26 July 1873.

189. *ibid.*



Whatever the effects such continuously reiterated arguments may or may not have had on their readers, labour newspapers did help to popularise some of the more important ideas current in the radical and trade unionist movements. In addition to making them known to numbers of provincial workers, they may also have legitimised many such notions in the minds of their readers.

Finally, in order to honour the commitment to 'further the interest of labour',<sup>190</sup> in their newspapers, Owen and Morgan developed editorial policies which ensured that certain practical functions could also be fulfilled. As has been demonstrated in preceding chapters, these included providing news, trade union information, educational articles and providing a forum for debate and discussion between readers. These papers also helped to mobilise workers during disputes, to warn against strike breaking and to raise money for locked-out and striking workers. At the general level of editorial policy, therefore, it is apparent that Owen and Morgan developed similar approaches, and that their papers performed similar ideological and organisational functions.

190. Tamworth Miners' Examiner 13 September 1873.

## CONCLUSION

By the late 1870's the venture inaugurated in 1871 to create a national system of locally based working class newspapers had come to an end. Not one of the 'system's newspapers had met with great success, and in the general context of the contemporary popular press their presence was ephemeral and their sales marginal. It is difficult to ascertain the extent of their circulation, but it is clear that at no stage were they in a position seriously to undermine the readership base of the more 'mainstream' local newspapers. Nevertheless, the labour newspapers of William Owen and John Thomas Morgan remain of considerable importance to historians of popular culture in the nineteenth century.

As newspapers and examples of contemporary journalism they may be characterised as much by their differences as by their similarities. Emerging from similar traditions of radical journalism, Owen and Morgan enjoyed the advantages of the same technological improvements in newspaper production. Yet they developed two very different looking newspapers. Owen chose to 'go modern', while Morgan's papers reverted in shape and structure to those produced by the illegal handpresses of thirty or forty years earlier. Faced with the same pressures and opportunities, therefore, the two editors followed different routes, neither of which was new to the history of popular newspaper journalism.

Irrespective of their shape, size or format, however, these papers attracted a similar type of reader. Although never hugely popular, they did perform important functions for what may be termed a radical provincial sub-culture. In other words they were supported by, and in turn became a valued means of expression to, a group of articulate and literate people who, despite their rejection of revolutionary politics, stubbornly maintained an acute sense of class. The newspapers acted as vehicles of communication for this network of trade union activists and local working class radicals which extended from the Executive members of trade unions to

their regional agents, branch secretaries and workplace activists and from the agitators of the republican and 'political' clubs to local intellectuals, amateur writers and poets. They enabled their readers, many of whom were unskilled workers, individually and collectively to air opinions, discuss problems and communicate generally with each other across a considerable area of industrial Britain.

The great labour unrest which gave rise to the trade union explosion of the early 1870's added greatly to the optimism of the editors. They believed, not entirely without reason, that vast resources of working class energy and creativity were about to be released by newly organised and enfranchised workers. The higher disposable incomes which followed the boom in trade and a series of successful wage disputes in many trades seemingly opened up a vast potential market for labour newspapers among working people. Contrary to the expectations of the editors, however, the unrest and the prosperity proved to be only temporary phenomena. The depression of the late 1870's rendered the production of labour newspapers an onerous and financially difficult task. As the weekly news headlines turned from tales of labour victories to those of defeats, and from reports of rapid unionisation and confidence in the future to the collapse of trade unions and a creeping sense of demoralisation, the Examiners, the Workman's Advocate and Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr ceased to perform their old functions. For three or four years, however, the editors of labour newspapers coped adequately with their many pressing problems. They located and maintained a basic readership, and endured the attacks made on them by more 'respectable' journals, employers and the processes of law.

The brief period of relative success which these papers enjoyed was due in large part to the dynamism and the untiring efforts of their editors. Both were young men of the same age, and both were eager to perform the dual public roles of journalists and agitators. Like the editors of earlier Chartist journals 'their most distinguishing feature was their commitment to the movement'.<sup>191</sup> Through great personal effort in newsrooms, on public

191. T.M.Kemnitz, 'Chartist Newspaper Editors', in Victorian Periodicals Newsletter, No.18, December 1972, p.1.

platforms and in committees these editors attempted to popularise, and may also have helped to legitimise, a crucially important set of political and trade unionist ideas. It was their involvement in, and intimate knowledge of, the contemporary radical and trade union movement which made their particular styles of 'labour journalism' so distinctive.

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APPENDIX I : CONTENT ANALYSIS(i) Balance of Content : Proportions of Total Space, Miners' and Workmen's Examiner

<u>1. Local News</u>	% 1874	% 1875	% 1876	% 1877	% 1878
Politics, Administration, Finance.	1.9	5	3.44	2.06	10.6
Local Economics, Industry, Trade Unions.	25.2	15.5	4.7	3.4	6.5
Social Conditions.	0.3	0.16	-	-	0.2
Religion, Temperance, Spiritualism.	0.09	0.39	0.9	5	4.5
Crime, Police News, Accidents.	6.3	3.23	3.16	1.92	6.4
Personalities.	0.09	1.91	0.12	-	-
Sport	0.2	1.1	-	-	-
Events: Clubs, Concerts, Lectures, etc.	1.3	1.52	1.43	0.69	3.1
Information : Timetables etc.	-	-	8.39	7.46	-
'Around the District' News Items.	0.4	2.38	4	3.14	2.8
Other Local News	-	1.27	0.15	-	0.04
Topography, Leisure.	-	-	-	-	-
<u>II National and Foreign News.</u>					
Politics.	2.8	4.5	7.3	4.9	3.4
Economics, Industry, Trade Unions.	5.8	2.3	0.74	0.25	0.2
Religion, Temperance.	0.5	1.26	1.49	1.12	0.3
Other National and Foreign News.	16	21.5	19.3	19.6	41.7
<u>III Editorial and Other Items.</u>					
Editorial Comment.	6.3	2.2	2.07	2.18	9
Correspondence, Personal Columns, Occasional series.	6.7	4.2	1.09	4.7	2.3
Fiction, Poems, Serialised Novels, Sermons, Educational Items.	12.5	7.4	9.64	9.14	0.6
Miscellaneous.	0.6	0.36	0.56	0.56	2.4
Advertisements	13.3	22.33	30.45	33.86	5.9
	100	100	100	100	100
Standard Column Centimetres	2600	2600	2600	2600	2600

APPENDIX I(ii) Comparison of First Edition of Labour Press, Miners' and Workmen's Examiner and Final Edition of the Miner.

	% Total Space 4 April 1874	% Total Space 24 August 1878
<u>I Local News</u>		
Politics, Administration, Finance	-	4.2
Economics, Industry, Trade Unions.	39.9	3.4
Social Conditions	-	-
Religion, Temperance, Spiritualism	-	-
Crime, Police News, Accidents	-	-
Personalities	-	1.2
Sport	-	1.5
Events, Clubs, Concerts, Lectures, etc.	0.08	4.2
Information : Timetables, etc.	-	-
'Around the District' News items	2.5	17.2
Other Local News	-	-
Topography, Leisure	1.9	-
<u>II National and Foreign News</u>		
Politics	5.8	-
Economics, Industry, Trades Unions	3.5	-
Religion, Temperance	0.8	0.9
Other National and Foreign News	19.9	41.7
<u>III Editorial and Other Items</u>		
Editorial Comment	7.3	18.3
Correspondence, Personal Columns, Occasional Series	0.7	-
Fiction, Poems, Serialised Novels, Sermons, Educational Items.	1.9	1
Miscellaneous	1.7	2.8
Advertisements	7.2	3.5
	100	100
Standard Column Centimetres	2600	1300

APPENDIX I(iii) Random Sample Content Analysis Comparison Between Miners' and Workmen'sExaminer and Wolverhampton Chronicle.

% Total Space  
Examiner Chronicle  
 19 June, 1875. 16 June  
 1875

I Local News

Politics, Administration, Finance	4.4	11.2
Economics, Industry, Trade Unions	15	12.1
Social Conditions	-	1.2
Religion, Temperance, Spiritualism	4	4.9
Crime, Police News, Accidents	3.7	9.8
Personalities	0.2	1.1
Sport	0.2	-
Events, Clubs, Concerts, Lectures, etc.	-	1.7
Information: Timetables etc.	-	-
'Around the District' News Items	3.4	7.2
Other Local News	-	1.8
Topography, Leisure.	2.7	-

II National and Foreign News

Politics	2.6	5.1
Economics, Industry, Trade Unions	2.6	0.6
Religion, Temperance	1.1	-
Other National and Foreign News	15.9	2.4

III Editorial and Other Items

Editorial Comment	4.1	3.3
Correspondence, Personal Columns, Occasional Series	4.6	0.3
Fiction, Poems, Serialised Novels, Sermons, Educational Items	6.9	1.8
Miscellaneous	1.7	1.2
Advertisements	27.5	34.4

100                      100

Standard Column Centimetres                      2600                      3584



(iv) Balance of Content : Proportions of Total Space, Workman's Advocateand Amddiffynnydd Y Gweithiwr.

	% of Total Space			
	<u>Workman's Advocate</u>		<u>Amddiffynnydd Y Gweithiwr</u>	
	1873	1874	1875	1875
<u>I Local News</u>				
Politics, Administration, Finance	0.4	1.5	-	0.6
Economics, Industry, Trade Unions	8.2	5.6	12.8	4.8
Social Conditions	-	-	-	-
Religion, Temperance, Spiritualism	-	-	-	-
Crime, Police News, Accidents	-	0.3	1.04	3.2
Personalities	0.2	0.08	-	0.4
Sport	-	-	-	-
Events, Clubs, Concerts, Lectures etc.	-	0.4	-	-
Information: Timetables etc.	-	-	-	-
'Around The District' News Items	-	-	-	0.6
Other Local News	-	-	-	-
Topography, Leisure	-	-	-	-
<u>II. National And Foreign News.</u>				
Politics	-	0.5	-	0.2
Economics, Industry, Trade Unions	6	3.7	3.5	-
Religion, Temperance	-	0.9	1.4	0.2
Other National and Foreign News	-	0.13	27.5	4.8
<u>III Editorial and Other Items</u>				
Editorial Comment	16.8	16.7	6.8	4.7
Correspondence, Personal Columns, Occasional Series	20.5	20.9	2.9	28
Fiction, Poems, Serialised Novels, Sermons, Educational Items	1.4	6.9	-	2.2
Miscellaneous	2.9	3.4	0.4	2.9
Advertisements	43.6	39	40.3	47.4
	100	100	100	100
<u>Standard Column Centimetres</u>	768	704	768	768

APPENDIX I

(v) Balance of Content : Random Sample Comparison between Workman's Advocate, Merthyr Telegraph, Amddiffynydd Y Gweithiwr and Tarian Y Gweithiwr

	% of Total Space.			
	Sample Date. 8 October 1875			
<u>I Local News</u>	<u>W.A.</u>	<u>M.T.</u>	<u>A.G.</u>	<u>T.G.</u>
Politics, Administration, Finance	-	17.6	1.4	0.8
Economics, Industry, Trade Unions	4.5	1.4	6.7	10.8
Social Conditions	-	-	-	-
Religion, Temperance, Spiritualism	-	0.4	-	9.6
Crime, Police News, Accidents	-	17.7	4.5	0.4
Personalities	-	0.3	0.6	0.6
Sport	-	-	-	-
Events: Clubs, Concerts, Lectures etc.	-	3.6	-	5
Information: Timetables etc.	-	7.1	-	-
'Around The District' News Items	-	-	-	1
Other Local News	-	-	-	-
Topography, Leisure	-	-	-	-
<u>II National and Foreign News.</u>				
Politics	-	1.1	-	-
Economics, Industry, Trade Unions	4.2	-	-	-
Religion, Temperance	-	-	0.6	-
Other National and Foreign News	31.3	7.8	9.4	-
<u>III Editorial and Other Items.</u>				
Editorial Comment	5.9	-	0.9	5.7
Correspondence, Personal Columns, Occasional Series	-	-	25.8	29.2
Fiction, Poems, Serialised Novels, Sermons, Educational Items	-	-	4.6	9.8
Miscellaneous	3.2	3	3	1.9
<u>Advertisements</u>	<u>43.7</u>	<u>39.8</u>	<u>4.3</u>	<u>25</u>
	100	100	100	100
<u>Standard Column Centimetres</u>	<u>704</u>	<u>1400</u>	<u>704</u>	<u>1600</u>

## Appendix I

### A note on method

Content analysis statistics relating to the Examiner/Miner were derived from the mean values of three random newspaper samples<sup>1</sup> taken from each year 1874 to 1878 inclusive. To test the accuracy of this random sample, a systematic sample of one in every six successive issues of the Examiner was undertaken for the year 1875. Following categorisation and the translation of column centimetre values into percentage of totals, the mean percentage values of the 1875 systematic sample were correlated with those of the 1875 random sample using Spearman's Rank Order Correlation. The result, + 0.96, showed a very high positive correlation between the two samples. The assumption was then made that random samples taken in 1874, 1876, 1877 and 1878 also represented the whole reasonably accurately.

The Workman's Advocate/Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr figures were also derived from a systematic sample of one in every six successive issues of the Workman's Advocate in the years 1873 and 1874. However, three dates were selected at random for the year 1875, and the contents of issues of both the Workman's Advocate and Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr which appeared on these dates were analysed.

1. The table of random sampling numbers reproduced in M. Drake, The Quantitative Analysis of Historical Data, D301, (Open University Press, 1974), pp. 61 was used in this exercise.

APPENDIX IIREADERS' LETTERSA) The Examiner/Mineri) Correspondence Topics 1874-1877

	1874	1875	1876	1877
Total Number of Letters Per Year	283	139	118	24
	% of total	% of total	% of total	% of total
Trade Unionism, Industrial relations in General	11	20.9	0.8	4.2
Trade Union Affairs of Miners	48.8	73.4	53.4	16.7
" " " " Metalworkers	1.06	1.4	0.8	-
" " " " Engineers	3.2	4.3	-	-
" " " " Agricultural Labourers	20.5	-	1.7	-
" " " " Others	2.1	-	-	-
Local Politics	0.3	1.4	2.5	-
National Politics	4.6	-	3.4	-
Friendly Societies, Funds, Co-operat- ion, Religion, Education	2.1	13.2	32.2	41.7
Social Conditions : Housing, Sanitation	1.8	2.9	1.7	37.5
Miscellaneous Subjects	4.6	-	3.4	-
	100	100	100	100

Appendix IIii) Geographical Distribution of Correspondents 1874-1877.

	1874	1875	1876	1877
Total Number of Letters Per Year	283	139	118	24
	% of Total	% of Total	% of Total	% of Total
Gloucestershire	19.8	15	0.8	-
Staffordshire	18.7	23.2	13.6	37.5
Shropshire	8.2	41	67.8	50
Warwickshire	0.7	0.7	-	-
Yorkshire	3.9	0.7	-	-
Durham	3.9	-	-	-
Lancashire	3.5	1.4	-	-
Derbyshire	0.3	2.2	-	-
Leicestershire	0.3	-	-	-
Northants	0.3	-	-	-
Somerset	2.5	-	-	-
Nottinghamshire	0.3	-	-	-
Lincolnshire	8.2	-	-	-
Norfolk	0.3	-	-	-
Hants	0.3	-	-	-
Bucks	0.3	-	-	-
London	1.1	-	-	-
Denbighshire	0.3	-	-	-
Monmouthshire	4.9	-	-	-
Glamorganshire	2.5	-	-	-
Carmarthenshire	0.3	-	-	-
'South Wales'	1.1	-	-	-
Flintshire	-	3.6	5	-
Australia	-	0.7	-	-
No reference to Location of Sender	18	10.8	12.7	8.3
	100	100	100	100

APPENDIX IIiii) Named and Unnamed Letters.

	% Named	% Unnamed	(No. of letters sent by Committees
1874	46.3	53.4	1
1875	39	60.4	1
1876	46.6	51.7	2
1877	42	58.3	-
% of Total	43.5	55.95	- )

iv) Correspondence from Trade Union Officials : Nos. of Letters Printed  
Officially representing Unions of:

	Miners & Enginemen	Metalworkers	Agricultural Labourers	Other Bodies,	Official Friendly Societies
1874	62 (i.e. 87%)	2	3	1	3
1875	32 (i.e. 94%)	-	-	-	2
1876	30 (i.e. 94%)	-	-	-	2
1877	- -	-	-	-	1
Total	124	2	3	1	8

## APPENDIX II

B) The Workman's Advocate/Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr.i) Correspondence Topics September 1873 to August 1874 : Language Used.

	<u>English</u>	<u>Welsh</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Trade Union Affairs of Coal Miners	-	34	13.4
"      '      Tinplate Workers	31	42	28.8
"           Smiths, Firemen and Enginemen	13	37	19.9
"           Ironworkers	10	11	8.3
"           Other Workers	2	3	2
Trade Unionism in General	4	30	13.4
Politics in General	10	5	5.9
Miscellaneous Subjects	5	16	<u>8.3</u>
			100

Total Number of Letters Printed

In English      =    75    (i.e. 29.6%)

In Welsh        =    178    (i.e. 70.4%)

Total No.     =    253.

APPENDIX IIii) Correspondence Topics, Workman's Advocate and Amddiffynnydd y GweithiwrAugust 1874 to December 1874.

	<u>% of Total in</u> <u>Workman's Advocate</u>	<u>% of Total in</u> <u>Amddiffynnydd y Gweithiwr</u>
Trade Union Affairs of Coal Miners	5.2	48
" Tinplate Workers	15.5	14
" Smiths, Fireman and Enginemen	18.9	6
" Ironworkers	43.1	10
" Other Workers	-	-
Trade Unionism in General	8.6	10
Politics in General	1.7	2
Miscellaneous Subjects	<u>6.9</u>	<u>10</u>
.. Total number of letters Printed	58	50

iii) Correspondence Topics, Workman's Advocate and Amddiffynnydd y Gweithiwr, 1875

	<u>% of Total in</u> <u>Workman's Advocate</u>	<u>% of Total in</u> <u>Amddiffynnydd y Gweithiwr</u>
Trade Union Affairs of Coal Miners	13.2	29.8
Tinplate Workers	2.6	17.5
Smiths, Firemen and Enginemen	7.9	5.3
Ironworkers	34.2	3.5
Other Workers	-	3.5
Trade Unionism in General	21	22.8
Politics in General	13.2	1.7
Miscellaneous Subjects	<u>7.9</u>	<u>15.8</u>
Total Number of Letters Printed	38.	57.



APPENDIX II(iv) Geographical Distribution of Correspondence to the Workman's Advocate :South Wales, February to December 1874.Key

10 - 15 Letters



5 - 9 Letters



1 - 4 Letters

Letters written outside South Wales

West Hartlepool

Cookley

Caernarfon

Mold



Appendix IIv) Correspondence from Trade Union Officers : Workman's Advocate 1874.

<u>Officials Representing Unions of</u>	<u>No. of Letters Printed 1874.</u>
Ironworkers	20
Tinplate Workers	17
Coal Miners	2
Enginemen	<u>2</u>
	41

(Note: Of the 311 letters printed in the Workman's Advocate in 1874, only 95 were signed by their authors. In 1875 only 38 letters appeared in the pages of the English language Workman's Advocate, 16 of which were signed. In Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr only two trade union officials contributed letters in 1875: Mabon (William Abraham) of the Miners' Union, and Philip Harries of the Ironworkers.)

Note on Method.

No sampling was required in this exercise. Every letter printed in both the Examiner/Miner and the Workman's Advocate/Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr was analysed.

Appendix IIIMembers of the Committee of the Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society (Ltd), 1878.

(Source : Instrument of Dissolution of the Staffordshire Co-operative and General Printing Society (Ltd), P.R.O. F88/29/1426).

Signatures of Members of the Committee

Boyce, Horton  
 Burslem Lodge of Ovenmen; Broad, George  
 Barforth, G.  
 Bessnet, William  
 Burslem Lodge of Miners; Lewis, Richard  
 Cartilidge, Thomas  
 Cobridge Lodge of Ovenmen; Wagstaff, Thomas  
 Davies, Richard  
 Dutton, George  
 Etruria Ironworkers; Williams  
 Fenton Lodge of Ovenmen; Bunt, Isiah  
 Far Green Lodge of Miners; Mosse, Alfred  
 Forrister, Sampson  
 Farrall, John  
 Fenton Park Miners, Evans, George  
 Goodwin, William  
 Holmes, Edward  
 Hanley Lodge of Miners; James, Benjamin  
 Hearney, John  
 Harrishead Miners' Lodge; Smith, Richard  
 Hancock, Daniel  
 Hallam, Thomas  
 Jones, John  
 Johns, John  
 Johnson, John  
 Kidsgrove Lodge of Miners; H(?), Mark  
 Longton Lodge China Saucer Makers; Barker, John  
 Longton Lodge of Ovenmen; Hughes, Alfred  
 Leeck, Thomas  
 Levi, James  
 Lunt, William  
 Meir, Joseph  
 Newcastle Lodge of Miners, Moore, John

Procter, Edward

Printers' and Transferers' Society; Burgess

Pope, Henry (Mrs.)

Reeves, John

Reeves, Thomas

Rowley, William

Robinson, James

Stoke Lodge of Ovenmen; Astley (?), Thomas

Sporren, Daniel

Smith, Joseph

Simpson, Richard (Mrs.)

Staffordshire Hat Pressers Society; Smith Alfred (Secretary)

Silverdale Miners Lodge; Lawton, Thomas

Stevenson, John (Mrs.)

Therston, Thomas

Tunstall Ovenmen Lodge; Woodward, John

Timms, William

Talk o' th' Hill Miners' Lodge; Edwards, William

United Hollow Ware Pressers; Bloor, Charles

.. Wilson, James

White, (?)

Wharton, John

Woodall, William

Yeomans, William

Jackson, Edwin, Secretary of Committee, no vote.

Representative of the Co-operative Newspaper Co., no vote.

'List of members who have not signed the forgoing instrument:

Bucknall Lodge of Miners, Harrison, S.

Brookfield, C.

Chesterton Miners; Barton, Eli

Goldenhill Miners Lodge; Nixon, Lewis and Smith

Horricks, William

Knulton Lodge of Miners; Bedrow, John

Madeley Lodge Miners; Barrat, David

Smith, George.

Stapleton, Robert'

Appendix IVList of Persons Holding Shares in the North Staffordshire Newspaper Company (Limited), 16 September 1881.

(Source: Memorandum of Association of the North Staffordshire Newspaper Company (Limited), P.R.O. BT31/2795/15286)

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Christian Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Shares Held</u>
Hulme	Thomas	Wolstanton	Retd. Manager	40
Lawton	Spencer	Burslem	Agent	20
Beardmore	John	Burslem	Ironmonger	15
Brown	Alfred	Hartshill	Gentleman	20
Wood	William	Burslem	Manufacturer	15
Wood	Thomas T.	Wolstanton	Manufacturer	15
Bennett	Enoch	Burslem	Solicitor	15
Maddock	James	Alsager	Manufacturer	10
Wood	Absalom	Bursley	Manufacturer	5
Owen	William	Burslem	Newspaper Editor	120
Edge	John W.	Burslem	Manufacturer	1
Cranshaw	John	Burslem	Schoolmaster	1
Bennett	George	Hanley	Potter	2

Secretary: William Owen

## Distribution of Examiner Local Editions 1874-1875.

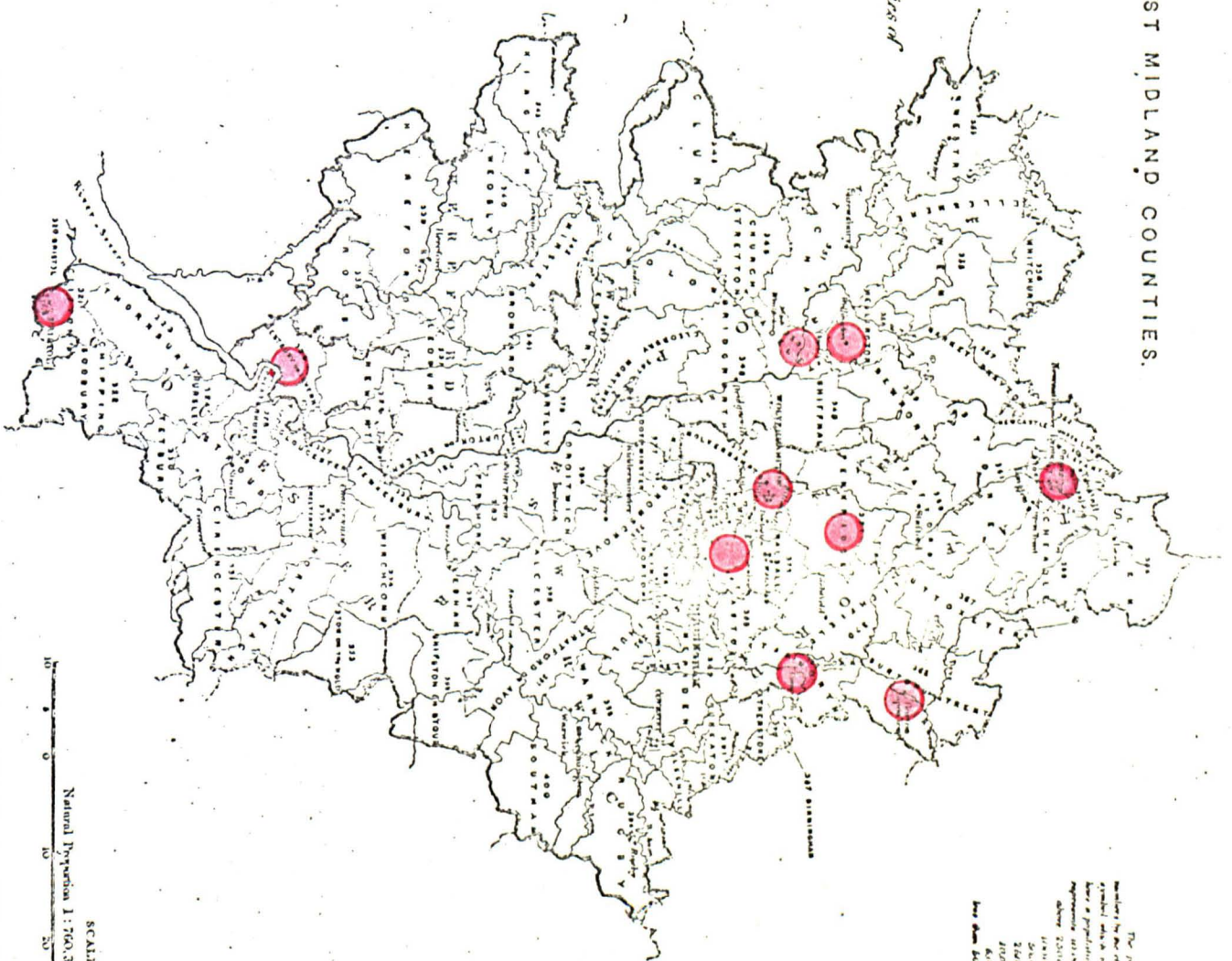
## Places of Publication.

(Source : Census of England and Wales, 1871)

## DIVISION VI. WEST MIDLAND COUNTIES.

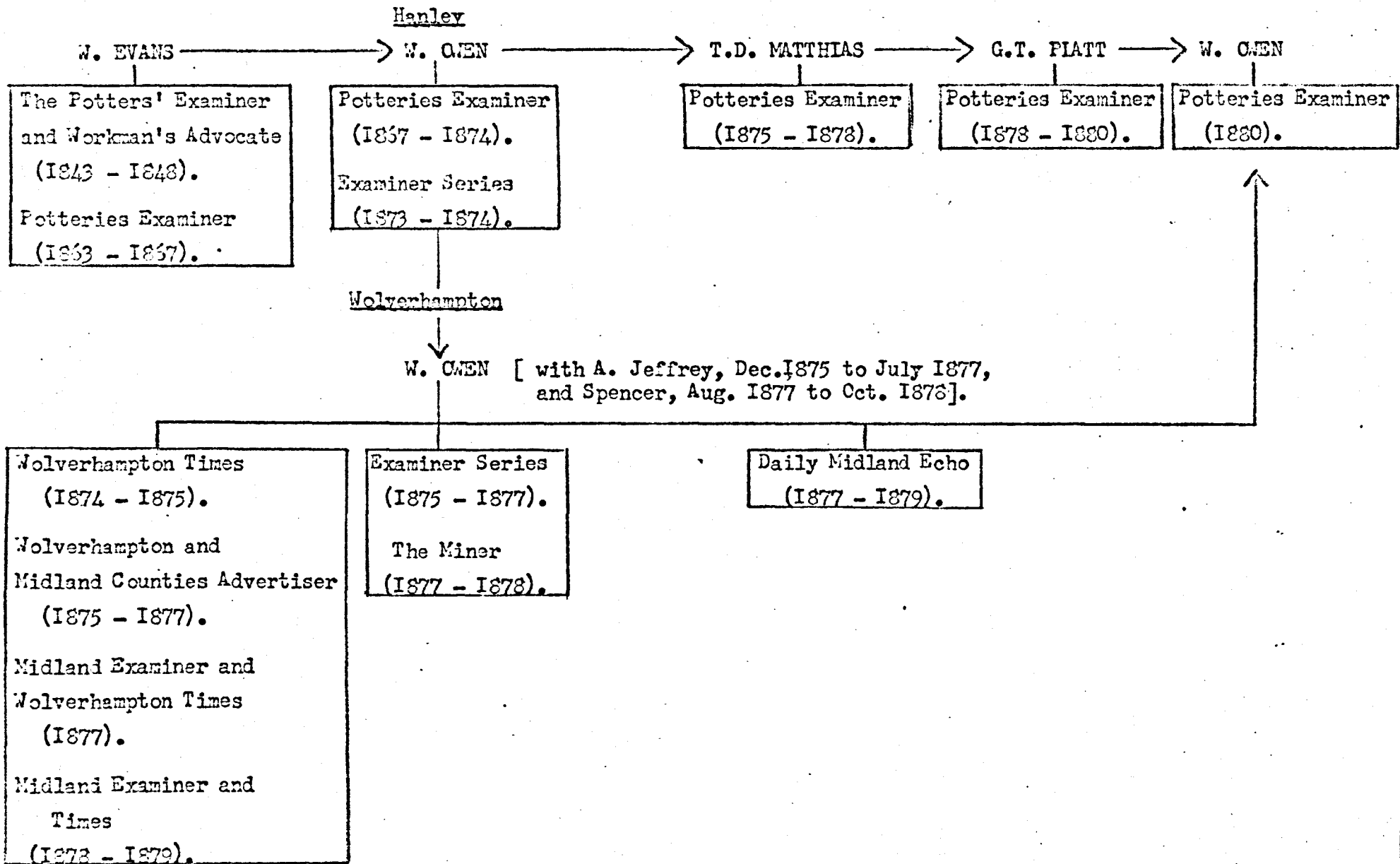
Comprising Registration Counties of

Gloucester  
Hereford  
Salop  
Shropshire  
Warwick



SCALE  
Natural Population 1:750,000 or 1 inch = 12 Miles

The population of each town in 1871 is shown in the margin of the map, and the number of the edition of the map is shown in the margin of the map. The number of the edition of the map is shown in the margin of the map.



Appendix VIIIndex of Fiction, Essays and Local History in the Forest of Dean Examiner  
1873 to 1877.Note.

In view of the recent upsurge of interest in periodical fiction in general, the following index may serve to convey the wide range of fictional material which was available to editors of local newspapers in the mid- to late- Victorian period. Titles are followed by author's name, unless not attributed (n.a.), and the date on which the item appeared or on which the serial commenced. These items appear in each of the Examiner editions, the Forest of Dean Examiner being the longest surviving edition of the series. Syndicated fiction in Victorian provincial newspapers is, sadly, a much neglected area of periodical history.

Fiction

- 'The Death Shadow', Dr. Maurice Davies, 19 December 1873
- 'On Christmas Eve', Florence Hodgkinson, 19 December 1873
- 'Driven to Fib', William W.T. (Author of "A Day in Arcadis"), 19 December '73
- 'Blessington Range', Agnes Ward, 26 December 1873.
- 'That Wretch - A Tale of a Dog', R. Rutter, 26 December 1873
- 'The Forfeit Hand', Alphonse Karr, 26 December 1873
- 'A Non Conventional Ghost', F.G.S., 26 December 1873
- 'Woman's Mission', H.O.H., 26 December 1873
- 'Industrial and Household Tales', 'reprinted by the special permission  
of Miss Meteyard, the Author', 2 January 1874
- Locksley Hall : A Story of the Period', William Wilson Turnbull,  
9 January 1874
- 'The Two Sisters, or, The Glass of Gin', Eliza Meteyard, 27 February 1874
- 'The Agitator Abroad', Edward Bradley, 6 March 1874
- 'How I Smelt Powder: an episode of the summer of '70', Bernard Barker,  
29 May 1874



'The Last of the Brownies', n.a. 29 May 1874

'How the Duchess's Cold was Cured', Mrs. Geo. Skelton

'A Lancashire Labour Club, a tale', Eliza Meteyard, 5 June 1874

'The Crew of the Wild Hawk Lugger', Frederick Gale, 12 June 1874

'Shaugh Bridge: The Story of a Woman's Revenge', Sidney Shelley,

24 July 1874

'An Old, Old Story', n.a., 21 August 1874

'The Peasant War: A Tale of the Agricultural Labourer', Unattributed,

20 October 1874

'A Doubtful Bargain', n.a., 6 November 1874

'A Clever Plan, or, the Geological Parson - a Tale of the

Goldfields', J.S. Borlase, 13 December 1874

'A Story of three Christmas Nights' n.a., 25 December 1874

'Living in Death', Marian Northcott, 25 December 1874

'A Madman's Dream', n.a., 1 January 1875

'Effie's Fortune', n.a., 8 January 1875

'The Awkwardness of Twins', n.a., 8 January 1875.

'The Rival Babies', n.a., 15 January 1875

'The Wife Artist', n.a., 15 January 1875

'The Sister's Sacrifice', n.a., 22 January 1875

'An Agreeable Mistake', n.a., 29 January 1875

'A Felon's Confession', Dr. Maurice Davies, 5 February 1875

'The Batchelor's Mistake', n.a., 5 February 1875

'A Miracle of Love', n.a., 5 February 1875

'The Story of an Old House', Perrin Browne, 12 February 1875

'The Rival Wooers', n.a., 19 February 1875

'Dr. Oliver's Maid', Eliza Meteyard, 2 April 1875

'The Thorn and then the Rose', Eliza Meteyard, 2 July 1875

'Wanted: a Child to Adopt', n.a., 10 September 1875

'A Horrible Dream', Quiz, 1 October 1875

'A Brother's Revenge', Captain Mayne Reid, 8 October 1875

'Plain Andrew Dun, or, Prejudice', from the Christmas Journal,

24 December 1875

'A Broken Heart; A Story of Staffordshire Life', n.a., 24 December 1875

'The Demon Marksman', G.T.Lawley (From the Bilston Mercury),

31 December 1875

'Bessie's Trouble: A Christmas Tale', Rev.Norman Glass, 31 Dec, 1875

'The Story of a Will', from the Illustrated London News, 12 Jan 1876

'Uncle Israel's Fortune'm N.A., 12 January 1876

'Why I remain an old maid', 12 January 1876

'Our Story Teller', n.a., 28 April 1876

'Our Fellow Lodger; A Sketch from a Law Student's Diary', J.J.D.

Bradley, 11 August 1876

'A Rival's Doing', n.a., 18 August 1876

'For Love of Money', n.a., 25 August 1876

'Brown's Good Fortune', n.a., 1 September 1876

'Lost and Won', n.a., 8 September 1876

'A Life Insurance Ghost', n.a., 15 September 1876

'Off with the Old, on with the New', n.a., 22 September 1876

'A Flash of Lightening', n.a., 19 September 1876

'An Adventure with the Devil', n.a., 6 October 1876

'A Legend from the Swiss Mountains', n.a., 13 October 1876

'Am Old Clergyman's Story, n.a., 20 October 1876

'Told in the Vernacular : An American Story', n.a., 27 October 1876

'A Simple Christian Story', Carl Halle, 22 December 1876

'Dead for One Night Only: an adventure with the body snatchers'.

Carl Halle, 22 December 1876

'Ghosts' Grievances', n.a., 22 December 1876.

'What the Parish Clerk Saw one Christmas Eve', G.T.Lawley, 29 Dec 1876

'The Author's Daughter', Mary Howitt, 19 January 1877

'The Story of William Gray', n.a., 22 June 1877

'Aunt Maggie's Verdict'. Edwin Bott, 17 August 1877

'Leonora: the Orphan Heiress', J.M.R.Cowley, 7 September 1877

Essays

- 'Direct Representation', Henry S. Vince, 7 November 1873
- 'The Educational Influences of Trade Unionism', n.a., 30 October 1874
- 'Higher Industrial Education', n.a., 6 November 1874
- 'The Pariahs of our Educational System', n.a., 27 November 1874
- 'Education - General and Technical', n.a., 2 January 1874
- 'Our Military System', H.M.Hunt, 12 June 1874
- 'Ireland: Her History and her Hopes', Henry Wedgewood, 24 April 1874
- 'Original Essays - Social, Political and Philosophical : Shiftiness',  
Henry Wedgewood, 4 September 1874
- 'England's Threatened Ruin and the Remedy', n.a., 11 September 1874
- 'Review of "The Working Classes" by Charles Laport F.S.S. (Westminster  
Review 1874)', n.a., 11 September 1874
- 'Notes on Books and Reading', n.a., 23 October 1874.

Local History

- 'A Series of Descriptive, Topographical and Geological Sketches',  
John Randall F.G.S., 11 October 1873
- 'The Borough of Wenlock: Its Past History and Present Political  
Aspect (Intended for publication in another form)', n.a.,  
23 January 1874
- 'Scraps on Geology', John Olliver, 20 February 1874
- 'Original Sketches', G.T.L., 7 May 1875
- 'Pulpit Photographs', n.a., 12 March 1875
- 'Darlaston: its People and its Church', n.a., 29 September 1876

Appendix VIII.An Example of 'Utopian Journalism in the Workman's Advocate

(Source : Printed as an editorial column in the Workman's Advocate,  
9 May 1874, author unknown, but presumed to be J.T.Morgan, the editor).

'A Vision

"I saw a vision in my sleep  
That gave my spirit strength to sweep  
Adown the gulf of time".

Campbell.

O LOOKED, and lo ! I beheld the Palace of Justice, wherein is situated the Hall of Independence, built on the Hill of Truth, and constructed on the granite blocks of Reason, Intelligence, and Wisdom, cemented and grouted by the concrete of Sympathy, Social Affinity, and Brotherly Love. It was surrounded of (sic) the Meadows of Benevolence, and the Gardens of Generosity. Its roof was composed by the golden tiles of Union, dug and cut out of the quarry of Reciprocity and a Common Humanity. It was based on the rock of Conscientiousness, and founded on the adamantine substratum of Honour, Rectitude and Integrity. The sons of industry and the heirs of manual toil were congregated within its marble halls and ivory chambers, They fed on the ripe fruit of Freedom, and they feasted on the nutritious viands of Peace, Purity and Perfection. The walls that engirdled this fair domain were Steadfastness, Sobriety and Virtue. Its woodlands, groves and harbours were full of singing birds and melodious nightingales. Birds of prey and beasts of ferocity were never once seen within its sacred precincts, and were for ever excluded from its hallowed enclosures. Its waters were for ever free and limpid, its skies ever clear and cloudless, and its atmosphere ever balmy, healthful and salubrious. I saw Lucifer afar off, gazing towards this beautiful Eden of unruffled bliss, and gnashing his wolfish teeth and hideous jaws, because he could not come near its confines, nor ever be permitted to invade its green pastures, or trouble its still waters. Its joyous inmates were evermore made happy by

"The feast of reason, and the flow of soul".

Strife, discord, misrule, and enmity were words for ever expunged from its dictary, and unknown to its celestial vocabulary. Poisonous herbs

and venomous reptiles were unknown and unfound in its lovely lawns, vernal meads, and fragrant parterres: Competence, Contentment, and Tranquility were the guardian angels who defended it from harm, and who protected it from molestation. Music resounded in its courts, and songs of jubilant mirth were echoed in its gem-adorned and pearl-frescoed apartments. The busts of honest Patriots, genuine Philanthropists, and disinterested Social Reformers ornamented its corridors and enriched its galleries, from Enoch the seventh - from Adam down to the last Reformer who expired on the blushing threshold and sun-lit door-step of the Millennial morn of world-wide Liberty, Universal Equality, and Unimpeachable Fraternity. Its sun shone in unsettling brilliance, casting a halo of supernal glory around this peerless Paradise, from which no hapless Adam, with downcast looks, and no tearful Eve, with dishevelled tresses, even went forth in mournful exile to lament their apostasy, or to deplore their sad and bitter fall. There were no corrugated brows, no wrinkled features, and no tear-stained countenances even once seen throughout the whole of this glorious place. Cherubim and Seraphim mingled with its residents and associated with its charming and exalted denizens. Its fountains flowed with the nectar, ambrosia, and nepenthe. Sultry heat and chilling frost never once pained or inconvenienced its blessed inhabitants. Its floors were inlaid with mother of pearl, rubies and sapphires. Its walls were hung with pictures and tapestried with figures of rarest art and most exquisite workmanship. The children of its citizens gambolled with the frolicsome lambs and frisky fawns that roved on its flowery leas, and disported in its blooming gardens. Its youths were redolent with health buoyant with mirth, and exuberant with pleasure, purity, and enjoyment. There was no sickness, no weakness, no languor, no lassitude, and no weariness in any of its people. Sin, and therefore, sorrow, were aliens for evermore. Agony and Death had no place there; they were found in other countries, and banished for ever to that abyss of woe - the Satanic regions - the deep, unfathomed pit of dark despair, so far different to this

land of pure bliss - this unsophisticated home of Love, the unblemished Sanctuary of Peace, and the perennial asylum of Perfect Rest and Complete Satisfaction. I awoke, and behold it was a dream!'

## APPENDIX IX

### Newspapers and the Law 1861-1881

The repeal of the Stamp Act in 1855 removed the single most repressive piece of newspaper legislation from the British statute books, whilst the rescinding of the Advertisement and Paper Duties in 1853 and 1861 respectively rendered newspapers cheaper to produce and to buy. 1861, however, did not mark the ending of all legislation relating to newspapers and their production. This appendix will briefly examine the legal position of newspapers and journals between 1861 and 1881 firstly in relation to their content and secondly with reference to the ways in which they were produced.

#### 1. Libel and the security system.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century laws relating to libellous reporting, particularly such libel as was considered 'seditious', were considerably relaxed. Although Fox's Act of 1792<sup>1</sup> had shifted the locus of decisionmaking in libel cases from judges to jury, the law remained oppressive, as Richard Carlile's petition to the House of Commons in February 1819 complaining of the powers to 'hold to bail in cases of libel', and urging the House to repeal 'the said greivous and oppressive law'<sup>2</sup> reminds us. By the end of that year, however, George III had introduced even more draconian measures to stem radical disaffection in his realm. Two of the notorious 'Six Acts' of December 1819 related directly to the repression of 'seditious libels'<sup>3</sup>, a term which was then defined specifically in terms of anti-Government agitation as material

'tending to bring into Hatred or Contempt the Person of his Majesty, His Heirs or Successors, or the Regent or the Government and Constitution of the United Kingdom, as by Law established, or either House of Parliament, or to excite His Majesty's Subjects to attempt the Alteration of any Matter in Church or State as by Law established, otherwise than by lawful means....'<sup>4</sup>

1. For a discussion of the libel laws in the 18th century consult Lubasz, H.M., 'Public Opinion comes of age: reform of the libel law in the eighteenth century', History Today viii, July 1958, pp. 453.-61.
2. Journals of the House of Commons, Vol.75, (1820), p.82.
3. 60 Geo III c.8 and 60 Geo III c.9.
4. 60 Geo III c.8.

In spite of the limitations imposed by this Act, which outlived its contemporary, the Stamp Act, the main course of concern for newspaper proprietors, editors, journalists, printers and distributors lay in the laws respecting libel against 'private character'. This law was amended and consolidated in 1843, when Lord Campbell steered through some important concessions to those still engaged in his original profession of journalism. The 1843 Act distinguished between the publishing of defamatory libel, punishable by imprisonment of up to one year, and the publishing of defamatory libel known to be false, which carried a maximum penalty of two years imprisonment. In the latter case an apology would be accepted as admissible evidence in the mitigation of damages. Furthermore a clause was inserted which enabled a defendant to plead that the published libel was in the public interest.<sup>1</sup> As a result of the 1792 and 1843 Acts it became increasingly more difficult for magistrates to prosecute in cases of libel by newspapers; indeed, of the forty two ex officio applications filed between 1808 and 1810, for example, twenty six were never brought to a prosecution.<sup>2</sup> If by the late 1860's the libel statutes remained oppressive in England, Wales and Ireland, and slightly less so in Scotland, it had become abundantly clear that, as a strategy of press control, repression had failed.

Newspaper, however, were reminded occasionally of the dangers of private libel prosecutions. In July 1872 Barlow, Mayor of Longton, and Hulse, presiding magistrate, took legal action against William Owen and the Potteries Examiner for publishing a 'libellous' article criticising the customary annual hiring system at Longton, indicating that they expected damages of no less than £2,000.<sup>3</sup> In the face of this first challenge from the law and local employers to his newly re-established newspaper, Owen called upon the support of the '12,000 workmen that call the Examiner THEIR paper'<sup>4</sup> by establishing an emergency defence fund. Within the first month

1. 6 and 7 Vict. c.96

2. Asquith I, in Boyce G., Curran J., Wingate P., (Eds.) Newspaper History : from the 17th century to the present day, (1978), p.112.

3. Potteries Examiner 6 July 1872, 20 July 1872.

4. ibid. 6 July 1872



£59.5.2. had been contributed to the fund, the sum reaching £443. 2.7. by November 1872.<sup>1</sup> The full amount, however, was never achieved, and the libel case seriously weakened the financial position of Owen's new Co-operative printing society during its first year of operation.

Throughout the 1870's a spate of other libel cases against newspapers tested various aspects of the 1792 and 1843 Acts. In 1875 action was taken by a radical Alderman in Devonport against the secretary of the local Conservative Association and proprietor of the Western Globe on the grounds that the paper had reported alleged malpractices at the local school board elections. As the plaintiff did not deny the specific charges made against him by the defendant, the case was discharged with costs for the newspaper.<sup>2</sup> The legal precedent set by this case strengthened considerably the rights of editors to publish reports of a politically contentious nature, provided that they could prove them to be true in a court of law. A further clause of the 1842 Act was clarified in February 1876 when, in Reg. v The World, it was decided that action could not be brought before a court with a view to receiving apologies alone. The prosecution, once instituted, would have to take its course and no compromise would be allowed between the parties involved 'the object of such a proceeding being not the vindication of character, but the repression of scandalous libels'.<sup>3</sup> In December of the same year an Irish incident resulted in a legal distinction being made between a 'libel' which could be proved to be true and a newspaper report which could be interpreted as an incitement to others to commit a crime. An attack in the Freeman's Journal of 27 April 1876 and the Cork Examiner of 13 April 1876 upon the harshness of the treatment meted out to Irish tenants by a particularly notorious land agent was shown in court not to be libellous. Nevertheless, the proprietor of the papers which had published the reports was prosecuted on the grounds that the tone of the reports was such that that they may be regarded as suggesting approval in the event of the plaintiffs assassination.<sup>4</sup>

1. *ibid.* 27 July 1872 to 2 November 1872.

2. Cox's Criminal Cases Vol. XII, 1871-74 (1875), pp.407-10

3. *ibid.* Vol. XIII, 1874-77 (1878), p.305.

4. *ibid.* p.310.

The law of libel, therefore, was still difficult, even treacherous, ground for newspapers during the 1860's and 1870's. In 1880-1, however, a major consolidation of the libel laws was made following the submission of the report of the Select Committee on the Law of Libel which met between August 1879 and July 1880. This report suggested important reforms in three main areas of the libel laws. Firstly, that the accurate reporting of the proceedings of legal public meetings for the public benefit should be considered privileged, except in the case of a defendant refusing to print a 'reasonable letter, or statement of explanation or contradiction by or on behalf of such plaintiff or prosecutor'.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, that no criminal libel prosecution should be taken against the proprietor, publisher, editor or any other person responsible for the publication of a newspaper, without the prior permission of the Attorney General. Finally, that the name and address of every newspaper proprietor should be registered at the office of the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies.<sup>2</sup> The tightening up of the libel law in 1880-1 rendered it even more difficult for private individuals to prosecute a newspaper on the grounds of libel; in fact, of eighty two applications to the Attorney General between 1884 and 1888 for permission to proceed with libel actions, only twenty seven were granted, and of these only six ended with prosecution.<sup>3</sup>

Whilst remaining a threat to editorial freedom throughout the period 1861-1881, the efficacy of libel law as a means of controlling the content of news papers declined sharply. This process was accelerated in 1869 when, after a long campaign, an important corollary clause of the 1819 Act was repealed. Clause Eight of Sidmouth, Castlereagh and Eldon's 60 Geo.III c.9 Act had required all newspapers of no more than two sheets and selling for less than sixpence to register a Recognisance or a Bond of £200 if in London or £100 elsewhere in the provinces as a surety against any fine imposed by a

1. 'Report from the Select Committee on the Law of Libel, with the Proceedings of the Committee, (1880), p.1.
2. *ibid.*
3. 'Return of Applications for his fiat made to the Director of Public Prosecutions under Sec.3 of 42 and 43 Vict. c.60. (the Newspaper Libel and Registration Act 1881)', (1888).

prosecutor for libel. The penalty for not paying the security was set at a £20 fine for the first offence and banishment<sup>1</sup> for the second. In July 1830 the punishment of banishment for successive offences was abolished, but the security bond was raised to £300 in London and £200 in the provinces.<sup>2</sup> The major significance of this amendment, however, lay in its decision to limit the power of obtaining damages for libel from the security to actions taken against editors, conductors or proprietors of newspapers, thereby exonerating all printers and compositors from any guilt or damages.<sup>3</sup>

In June 1849 newspaper reformers organised into a new pressure group, the Newspaper Stamp Abolition Committee, demanded more sweeping changes in legislation relating to the content of newspapers than was envisaged in the Act of 1830. The object of the new group was

'to obtain the exemption of the Press from all taxation, and its emancipation from all control, except that of a Court of Law.'<sup>4</sup>

They campaigned for not merely the repeal of the Stamp Act but for the total abolition of 60 Geo III c.9 and 1 Gulielmi c. 73, thus removing entirely the Security System. Until 1861 certain reformers, Ayrton for example, adhered to this maximalist programme, whilst others pursued a more moderate single-issue campaign against the Stamp Act. After the repeal of the latter in 1861, however, much of the enthusiasm for further reforms flagged, and the campaign for the removal of the Security System lost much of its dynamism. Apathy continued until Charles Bradlaugh's National Reformer became the subject of a libel prosecution in 1868. The major test case revived the reform movement, and the renewed campaign, together with Bradlaugh's brilliant self-defence, which eventually led the prosecution to abandon the case, contributed greatly to the repeal of the Security System in July 1869.<sup>5</sup>

1. 60 Geo III c.9.

2. 1 Gulielmi IV c.73.

3. 1 Gulielmi IV c.73 and Collet C.D. History of the Taxes on Knowledge, (1933), p.218.

4. Collet op.cit. p.190.

5. *ibid.* pp. 208-18 for an account of Bradlaugh's trial.

The 1869 package formally repealed all or parts of a number of laws directly or indirectly affecting the content of newspapers, including 36 Geo.III c.8, 39 Geo IV c.9, 11 Geo IV and I Gulielmi IV c.73, 6 and 7 Gulielmi IV c.76, 2 and 3 Vict. c.12, 5 and 6 Vict. c.82, and 16 and 17 Vict.

ii. Liability, Embezzlement and the Protection of Funds.

The second major body of legislation relating to newspapers pertained to the managerial conditions under which they were produced. Until the early 1870's many newspapers, and virtually all distributing and most merchant concerns were conducted by individual or small family or private firms.<sup>1</sup> The Potteries Examiner until 1871 and the Workman's Advocate until 1876 were conducted upon such informal bases, with unlimited liability for losses in the event of bankruptcy or dissolution. Others, the Beehive being an important example, were established as companies with limited liability from the early 1860's. At the time of their establishment or reorganisation labour newspapers were registered either as Industrial and Provident Societies or as Limited Joint-Stock Companies. The law relating to these separate forms of organisation will be examined in reverse order.

An Act legalising the extension of limited liability to most joint-stock companies in various areas of manufacturing industry was passed in 1895.<sup>2</sup> but the Act was not universally adopted among smaller firms for over fifteen years. The Limited Liability Act enabled companies with capital divided into shares of a nominal value of not less than ten pounds to register for limited liability. In 1862, the Companies Act consolidated the 1855 Act, particularly in relation to the liability of individual shareholders in the overall liability of a company at the time of its dissolution.<sup>3</sup> The position of industrial and Provident Societies and their members, however, was not so secure. An Act of 1862<sup>4</sup> strengthened the 1855 Friendly Societies Act, and in 1869 the twenty fourth clause of the 1855 Act, which referred to the

1. Cole G.D.H. and Postgate R. The Common People (1971), p.331.

2. 18 and 19 Vict. c.63

3. 25 and 16 Vict. c.89

4. 25 and 16 Vict. c.87

protection of Friendly Society Funds, was extended to include the funds of Trade Unions, an amendment which was to remain in force until 1 August 1870.<sup>1</sup> Many aspects of the liability of Friendly Society members, however, were not clarified until the passing of the Friendly Societies Act of 1875. This act stipulated that no trustee was to be liable to make good any deficiency in society funds other than for money received personally<sup>2</sup>, and that amalgamation or transfers could not prejudice the rights of any creditor.<sup>3</sup> The act also empowered the Chief Registrar to intervene in the case of a society whose funds were deemed to be insufficient to meet existing claims. The act also empowered the Chief Registrar to intervene in the case of a society whose funds were deemed to be insufficient to meet existing claims,<sup>4</sup> and to order the dissolution of the society. The Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society Limited, registered as an industrial and Provident Society, for example, survived from 1871 until September 1878. No evidence exists to suggest that the Registrar General intervened to dissolve the society, but the liabilities of the society on the date of dissolution amounted to £833.19.10. Assets, however, were assessed at £566.8.8., whilst share capital totalled £921. 7. 9.<sup>5</sup>

Another form of protection conceded to the managers and proprietors of newspapers, whether individually, Joint Stock or Friendly Society based, was the gradual extension of legislation pertaining to fraud and embezzlement. Punishment for fraud was extended in 1858 to include sections 16 and 24 of the 1855 Act<sup>6</sup>, whilst a decade later the Larceny and Embezzlement Act reduced the expense and the delay of legal action in cases of embezzlement by clerks or servants of a company.<sup>7</sup> This latter Act, however, did not specify whether embezzlement moneys could be returned to the parent society or company. Such ambiguities in the fraud laws could prove injurious to small newspaper

1. 32 and 33 Vict. c.61

2. 38 and 39 Vict. c.60., clause 16 paragraph 10.

3. *ibid.* clause 24 paragraph 5.

4. *ibid.* clause 25 paragraph 86.

5. 'Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Society Limited. Instrument of Dissolution, September 1878.' FS8/29/1426, pp.4-5.

6. 21 and 22 Vict. c.101.

7. 31 and 33 Vict. c.116.

societies and companies. The Potteries Examiner, for example, suffered serious loss by embezzlement in its first year of operation under the aegis of the Staffordshire Co-operative Newspaper and General Printing Company Limited, when in April 1872 Thomas Jones, Society Treasurer, vanished with £188. 1.6 $\frac{1}{2}$  of the Society funds.<sup>1</sup> The money was never retrieved. In 1875, after the submission of the report of the Royal Commission on Friendly Societies of 1870 - 1874, laws relating to fraud were extended. As a result, punishment for embezzlement from Friendly Societies was, for a summary conviction, set at a maximum of £20 plus costs, in addition to which the defendant was to repay all of the money embezzled, in default of which the defendant was to be imprisoned with or without hard labour, for a period not exceeding three months.<sup>2</sup>

1. Potteries Examiner 18 April 1872, 28 September 1872.

2. 38 and 39 Vict. c.59, clause 16 paragraph 9.

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Salopian and West Midland Monthly Illustrated Journal  
Shrewsbury Chronicle  
Shropshire Examiner and All Round the Wrekin Advertiser  
Shropshire Guardian  
South Staffordshire Examiner  
Spice  
Staffordshire Knot  
Staffordshire Sentinel  
Tamworth Herald  
Tamworth Miners' Examiner and Workingmen's Journal  
The Times  
The Watchman : Journal of Industry  
Wednesbury Examiner  
Weekly Burslem Mail  
West of England Examiner  
Wigan Observer  
Wolverhampton Chronicle  
Wolverhampton Echo  
Wolverhampton Times

Working Man's Friend

Wrekin Echo

(b) Wales

Amddiffynydd y Gweithiwr

The Baptist

Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian

Y Fellten

The Ferret or South Wales Ratepayer

Glamorgan Gazette

Y Gweithiwr

Y Gwron

Merthyr Express

Merthyr Star

Merthyr Telegraph

Merthyr Times

Monmouthshire Valley Reporter

Rhondda Gazette

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